NIETZSCHE'S *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA*

Nietzsche regarded *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as his most important philosophical contribution because it proposes solutions to the prob lems and questions he poses in his later books for example, his cure for the human disposition to vengefulness and his creation of new values as the antidote to nihilism. It is also the only place where he elaborates his concepts of the superhuman and the eternal recurrence of the same. In this *Critical Guide,* an international group of distin guished scholars analyze the philosophical ideas in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, discussing a range of topics that include literary parody as philosophical critique, philosophy as a way of life, the meaning of human life, philosophical naturalism, fatalism, radical flux, human passions and virtues, great politics, transhumanism, and ecological conscience. The volume will be invaluable for scholars and students interested in Nietzsche's thought.

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NIETZSCHE'S *THUS SPOKE ZARATHUSTRA*

A Critical Guide

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[W]hat is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, has truthfulness as the supreme virtue – in other words, the opposite of the *cowardice* of the 'idealist' who flees from reality, Zarathustra has more courage in his body than all thinkers put together. To tell the truth and *to shoot arrows well*, that is the Persian virtue.

Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo*

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Note on Texts, Translations, and References

The following abbreviations of Nietzsche's works are used in this volume. The specific English translations used by each author are listed in a footnote after the first reference to a translated passage. The Bibliography provides a complete information about all translations used as well as all the cited secondary literature and the cited primary sources for Nietzsche's texts. In the references to Nietzsche's works, Roman numerals generally denote the volume number of a set of collected works or the standard subdivision within a single work, and Arabic numerals generally denote the relevant section number. "P" is the abbreviation for the preface (or in the case of *Z*, the Prologue) to a given work (except for the preface to the 1886 edition of *BT*). Page numbers are added when sections are long, providing more precise information about the relevant text. In citing Nietzsche's unpublished fragments in *KSA*, references provide the volume number followed by the relevant fragment number. In cases where Nietzsche's works are cited from *KSA*, a page number is typically provided. In citing *KSB*, the volume number is followed by the letter number.

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Abbreviations

Abbreviations for Nietzsche's collected works in the original German

KGB	*Friedrich Nietzsche: Briefwechsel. Kritische Gesamtausgabe*
KSA	*Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Werke. Kritische Studienausgabe*
KSB	*Friedrich Nietzsche: Sämtliche Briefe. Kritische Studienausgabe*

Abbreviations for titles of published works

AOM	*Vermischte Meinungen und Sprüche* (republished in 1886 in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* II); translated as *Assorted Opinions and Maxims*
BGE	*Jenseits von Gut und Böse*; translated as *Beyond Good and Evil*
BT	*Die Geburt der Tragödie*; translated as The *Birth of Tragedy*. The "Attempt at a Self-Criticism" added to the 1886 edition is cited as "Attempt" followed by the relevant section number
CW	*Der Fall Wagner*; translated as *The Case of Wagner*
D	*Morgenröthe*; translated as *Daybreak* or *Dawn*
GM	*Zur Genealogie der Moral*; translated as *On the Genealogy of Morals* or *On the Genealogy of Morality*
GS	*Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*; translated as *The Gay Science*
HH	*Menschliches, Allzumenschliches*; translated as *Human, All Too Human*. References to the two-volume 1886 edition are indicated by Roman numerals (*HH* I and *HH* II)
HL	*Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* II); translated as *On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life*
RWB	*Richard Wagner in Bayreuth* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* IV)
SE	*Schopenhauer als Erzieher* (*Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen* III); translated as *Schopenhauer as Educator*

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TI *Götzen-Dämmerung*; translated as *Twilight of the Idols*. References include an abbreviated chapter title and section number.

UM *Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen*; translated as *Untimely Meditations*

WS *Der Wanderer und sein Schatten* (republished in 1886 in *Menschliches, Allzumenschliches* II); translated as *The Wanderer and His Shadow*

Z *Also sprach Zarathustra* (Part IV originally published privately); translated as *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In most of the chapters in this anthology, references include the part number in Roman numerals and an abbreviated chapter name that is sometimes followed by the section number in Arabic numerals. For example, (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3) refers to the third section of the Prologue, and (*Z*:III "Convalescent" 2) refers to the second section of the chapter entitled "The Convalescent" in Part III. Alternatively, references list the part number in Roman numerals followed by "P" for "Prologue" or the chapter number in Arabic numerals (not included in Nietzsche's manuscripts), sometimes followed by the section number in Arabic numerals. For example, (*Z* P:1) refers to the first section of the Prologue and (*Z* III.13:2) refers to the second section of the chapter entitled "The Convalescent" in Part III

Abbreviations for private publications, authorized manuscripts, and unpublished works

A *Der Antichrist*; translated as *The Antichrist* and *The Anti-Christ*

EH *Ecce homo*; translated as *Ecce Homo*. References include an abbreviated chapter title and section number. For example, (*EH* "Destiny" 3) refers to the third section of the chapter entitled "Why I Am a Destiny." In the chapter entitled "Why I Write Such Great Books," the section numbers within the material devoted to one of Nietzsche's books is preceded just by the abbreviation of the relevant book title. For example, (*EH* BT:2) refers to the second section of the material in the chapter "Books" devoted to BT

GSt "Der griechische Staat;" translated as "The Greek State" (references are to page numbers)

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PPP "Die vorplatonischen Philosophen;" translated as *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers* (references are to page numbers)

PTAG "Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen;" translated as *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*

Abbreviations for Nietzsche's unpublished notebooks and translations of notebook material

CWFN *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*. For volumes that include Nietzsche's unpublished writings, these are cited by volume number and fragment number; for volumes that are translations of Nietzsche's published works, they are referenced by the abbreviation of the translated work and corresponding year of publication

WLN *Friedrich Nietzsche: Writings from Late Notebooks* (cited with page number)

WP *Der Wille zur Macht*; translated as *The Will to Power* (always cited with the corresponding entry from *KSA*)

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Introduction

Keith Ansell-Pearson and Paul S. Loeb

Friedrich Nietzsche's *Thus Spoke Zarathustra: A Book for Everyone and for No One* (*TSZ*) (1883–1885) is a text that was celebrated by creative artists and writers in the twentieth century and it continues to have a wide readership outside academia. This book has also been appreciated by some seminal thinkers in the history of continental philosophy – notably Martin Heidegger, Eugen Fink, Karl Löwith, and Gilles Deleuze. However, recent philosophical scholarship tends to marginalize *TSZ* and to downplay its significance in our engagement with Nietzsche's thought. This neglect is no doubt understandable. The text is perhaps the best example we have of his self-confessed philosophical heterodoxy, and he himself pointed out its unusual relation to the rest of his corpus: "Suppose I had published my *Zarathustra* under another name, for example, that of Richard Wagner—the acuteness of two thousand years would not have been sufficient for anyone to guess that the author of *Human, All-Too-Human* is the visionary of *Zarathustra*" (*EH* "Clever" 4; *EH* 1989).

The aim of this volume is to remedy this current neglect of *TSZ* by highlighting its importance for a fuller understanding of Nietzsche's contribution to philosophy. Our hope is that this new collection of essays by leading figures in the international community of Nietzsche scholars will help show why he was right to claim that *TSZ* needs to assume a central role in any informed appreciation of his style of philosophical practice as well as of the fundamental content of his core ideas. We also expect that this collection will help bring *TSZ* into better contact with the kinds of questions, problems, and debates that animate contemporary philosophy.

More specifically, the chapters in this Critical Guide separately endeavor to (a) help explain Nietzsche's claim that *TSZ* strives to resolve the important problems that are posed, but not resolved, in his other, more widely discussed texts (like *BGE* and *GM)* – for example, how to cure the human disposition to vengeful thinking and how to give meaning to human life; (b) help explain why Nietzsche's turn to art, poetry, and

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fiction in *TSZ* is central to Nietzsche's project during the mature phase of his thinking, for example as a new kind of parodic and satirical critique, or as a narrative exemplification of circular time; (c) help show how *TSZ* addresses fundamental philosophical problems and questions that preoccupy contemporary philosophers today, such as the problem of persistence through change or the question of how human action is motivated; (d) help explain how *TSZ* contributes to the ongoing revitalization of the practice of philosophy as a way of life; and (e) help show how *TSZ* is pertinent to pressing contemporary concerns, such as the emergence of a widespread ecological conscience and the debate about transhumanism.

Because our guiding question is why philosophers today should care about *TSZ*, the chapters in this book do not offer purely exegetical treatments of this text and do not concentrate on scholarly questions about the place of this text in the history of philosophy or in Nietzsche's philosophical development. Also, since the Cambridge Critical Guides are intended for scholars and graduate students, these essays do not present introductory-level discussions, outlines, or commentaries on *TSZ*. Accordingly, this volume does not attempt to provide a comprehensive coverage of Nietzsche's text and its concepts, or of the various interpretive controversies concerning this text and its concepts. Instead, the focus is a philosophical discussion of topics that are the subject of interest today in the field of philosophy and within the community of philosophical Nietzsche scholars. However, we realize that philosophical readers who harbor misgivings about this text and its concepts may be disinclined to consider the philosophical relevance of *TSZ*. So we would like to address some common complaints before we provide an overview of the chapters in this Critical Guide. We hope that these brief framing remarks will facilitate a more open-minded approach to Nietzsche's book and to this collection of essays.

Some Common Complaints about *TSZ*

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is unique among Nietzsche's central philosophical works, and indeed in the history of philosophy, because it is not written in the author's own voice and is instead constructed in the form of a biblical narrative with a fictional teacher named "Zarathustra" taking the place of Jesus. In the course of this book, just as in the Gospels of the New Testament, this teacher offers an extended string of speeches, sermons, parables, and prophesies to the beloved disciples who have chosen to follow him. In addition, the narrative depicts events in the teacher's life

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that closely resemble the events in the Gospels. For example, the protagonist is tested by the devil (*Z* III.2); he rages against self-proclaimed good and just people who are identified as Pharisees (*Z* III.12:26); he is asked to heal those who are blind and crippled (*Z* II.20); he calls himself a fisher of men and struggles with the doubts and apostasies of his disciples (*Z* IV.1; *Z* III.8); like Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane, he suffers excruciating self-doubt about his mission during a pivotal moment of solitude away from his disciples (*Z* II.22); and he gathers a select group of followers for a last supper (*Z* IV.12). Most importantly, at the end of the book that Nietzsche published without Part IV, Zarathustra experiences a self-sacrificing martyrdom and crucifixion that allows him to redeem humankind from all sin (*Z* III.13:2, *Z* III.14) – after which he is resurrected to live again for all of eternity (*Z* III.2:2, *Z* III.16).[1] At certain points in this book that Nietzsche called his "Testament" or "fifth Gospel" (*KSB* 6: 373, 375), there even appears a narrative voice that is historically distant from the events in the story, thus imitating the different kinds of narrative voices and sources in the New Testament compilation (*Z* IV.12, *Z* IV.19:1).[2]

Confronted with such a strange design, many philosophers, historians of philosophy, and even scholars of Nietzsche's philosophy have been at a loss as to how to approach this book and have tended to marginalize it, dismiss it, or just ignore it altogether. The reasons for their resistance and negative valuation are not hard to understand. Since few of them are Christian, they see no reason to investigate the details of some imitation or parody of the Christian bible. Also, they are not trained as literary critics, much less as biblical exegetes, and they have little interest in doing the background work that would help them to understand and appreciate the unique style of this book. Perhaps there was a time when this book felt compelling to a majority of philosophers with a Christian background, but that time is long gone – maybe even due to the tremendous early influence of this very book.[3] It is all well and good that readers of the Bible are persuaded by image-laden allegories, sermons, and parables, but this is anathema to philosophers who look for logic, reason, and argumentation. Most of what

[1] See Loeb (2010: 101–104, 114–117); and Loeb (2015b).

[2] This is not the only literary model for Nietzsche's design, but it is certainly the dominant one. Other literary and artistic models include ancient Buddhist lore, ancient Greek and Persian mythology, the Homeric epics, the Old Testament, ancient Greek tragedies and satyr plays, Pindar's odes, Plato's philosophical dramas, Menippean satire, Lucretius' philosophical poem, Goethe's *Faust*, Emerson's essays, Hölderlin's poetic narratives, and Wagner's operas. See also the helpful explanatory notes in Parkes (2005).

[3] See Gadamer (1986).

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Nietzsche's protagonist says is conveyed with an air of authority that is supposed to compel our assent, but this is just what Aristotle long ago called the logical fallacy of appealing to authority. Moreover, Nietzsche himself teaches that Christianity is a completely bankrupt system of thought, so why study a book that is based on the paradigm for all Christian thinking? Indeed, since we can simply read Nietzsche's later works – in which he communicates the same things, but this time in his own voice, and thankfully with a much clearer logic – why bother with this bizarre biblical palimpsest? This is especially the case since the philosophical books that Nietzsche wrote afterward, notably *BGE* and *GM*, presumably convey a more developed and sophisticated version of his earlier *Zarathustra* ideas – ideas such as the vengeful inspiration of moral judgment and the post-Christian nihilistic predicament. Perhaps Nietzsche wrote *Zarathustra* so as to better communicate with a much wider audience outside the world of academically trained philosophers (*KSB* 6: 375), in which case this is all the more reason for simply passing it over in favor of those later works that he wrote especially for philosophers. In any case, as one Nietzsche scholar has recently commented, there is something aesthetically unpleasant about the whole literary exercise:

> In linguistic style, it has an affected, archaic air, with resonances of the Luther Bible. One of the key interpretive questions is whether it is a parody of a religious book, or meant to be taken 'straight,' as a kind of quasi religious mystical outpouring. My own view is that it is downright unbearable (some choice passages aside) unless one takes it as a rather arch sendup of a religious book, and even then it is tough going. (Huddleston 2019: 349)[4]

These are all serious worries about the book that is the subject of this Critical Guide. Nevertheless, we think there is an appropriate response to be found in the extended advice Nietzsche offered for understanding his book. For the most part, this advice can be found in *Ecce Homo*, where he presents a review of his life and philosophical career. Indeed, it is quite striking that Nietzsche spends most of his time in *Ecce Homo* introducing, quoting, explaining, praising, and celebrating *TSZ* as his most important book. He gives many reasons for this claim, including especially its extraordinary aesthetic qualities and the intensity of feeling that inspired its composition. But for our purposes here, what matters most is his assertion that this book is the only place where he presents the constructive

[4] See also Gadamer (1986), Tanner (1994), and Huddleston (2020).

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and affirmative solutions to the questions and problems he poses in the critical, skeptical, and polemical books that came later (*EH*: BGE). His most precise statement of this point is his claim that only *TSZ* contains the counter-ideal to the ascetic ideal that he explains, diagnoses, and criticizes in the third essay of his *Genealogy of Morality* (*EH*: GM). This statement is supported by his claim at the end of the second essay of *GM* that only Zarathustra will be able to redeem reality and humankind from the curse placed upon them by this ascetic ideal – that is, from the great nausea, from the will to nothingness, from nihilism. Only Zarathustra will be able to liberate the will and once again give the earth its goal and hope to humankind. In fact, Nietzsche even concludes this second essay by deliberately silencing his own authorial voice for fear that he will interfere with the redemptive task that can only be accomplished by the superior teacher he envisions arriving in a stronger and healthier future (*GM* II:24–25).

It is true, then, that Nietzsche distances himself from his fictional protagonist – but not, as many critics assume, because he does not fully endorse his protagonist's philosophical views. Instead, it is because he thinks that these views are actually superior to his own views, that is, to the views he teaches in his own voice in the works he wrote after *TSZ*. Given what he says in *EH*, this means that he thinks of his own philosophical task as merely critical, not constructive. In terms of the distinction, he defends in *BGE* 211, this means that he thinks of himself as a philosophical laborer who is only able to prepare the ground for genuine philosophers who are able to create new values. He investigates historical origins, codifies past value-creations, offers methodological arguments, and criticizes the ideas of his contemporaries. He presents credible and arduous intellectual processes of inquiry, as well as skeptical and irreligious modes of thinking – including of course, and especially, his savage critique of the Gospels (*A* 28–47). But the genuine philosopher of the future, who is envisioned only in *TSZ*, is someone who will make use of all these preliminary labors in order to issue commands and laws that will determine the destiny and purpose of humankind (*BGE* 211; *KSA* 11:26[407], *KSA* 11:38[13]). This is why Nietzsche presents his fictional protagonist as an authoritative pedagogical orator rather than as a contemplative thinker-writer who offers logical analyses and arguments. Again, this is not because these logical analyses and arguments are absent. Instead, Nietzsche wants us to keep in mind everything he has taught us in his later books as the essential support and background – indeed, as the launching platform – for

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Zarathustra's central teachings.[5] For example, we should keep in mind everything he has taught us in his post-*Zarathustra* works about the inherent weakness and illness of humankind as the background for Zarathustra's inaugural command and law that the human species should sacrifice itself for the sake of a stronger and healthier superhuman species (*Z* P:3–5). According to Nietzsche, all the philosophical labor in his later books is presupposed by Zarathustra's creation of new values that are no longer centered, as has always been the case before (*JS* 1), around the survival and preservation of humankind.[6] This new command introduces a new meaning and goal for humankind that redeems it from the Christian ascetic ideal and from the great nausea, nihilism, and will to nothingness that grew out of this ideal.

It is no coincidence, then, that Nietzsche begins his *Zarathustra* narrative with the hermit saint telling Zarathustra that God is already dead (*Z* P:2). For Nietzsche thinks that his own acceleration of the collapse of the 2000-year-old system of Christian belief is required before Zarathustra's future millennial project can begin. In *GM* II:24–25 Nietzsche baptizes his protagonist, whom he elsewhere calls his son and heir (*KSB* 6: 407), as "the Antichrist," "the conqueror of God," and "Zarathustra the Godless." This is because Zarathustra's philosophical invention of new values that are centered around the self-overcoming of humankind is the whole key to dispelling all the remaining shadows of God. Thus, far from being a new kind of religious book, or a "quasi-religious-mystical outpouring," *TSZ* is supposed to represent the ultimate triumph of philosophy over religion – of Dionysus over the Crucified (*EH* "Destiny" 9). When Nietzsche tells us that his *Zarathustra* book came to him as a kind of divinely revealed truth (*EH Z*:3, 6), this has nothing to do with the kind of religious revelation that is claimed as the source of the biblical texts he is imitating and parodying. What he has in mind instead is the philosophizing god Dionysus (*BGE* 294–295) who is the *circulus vitiosus deus* and the personification of cosmic eternal recurrence (*BGE* 56).[7]

This brings us back, then, to Nietzsche's reason for repurposing the Christian New Testament as a means of communicating his most important philosophical insights. In the first place, these are insights that he does not want to communicate in his own voice because he would then be

[5] Hence Nietzsche's remark in *The Antichrist* that Zarathustra, like all great intellects, is a skeptic (A 54). For further discussion of this point, see Ansell-Pearson (2021).
[6] For further discussion of this point, see Loeb and Tinsley (2019: 773–793) and Loeb (2019b).
[7] See Loeb (2010: 2–4, 190).

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usurping and undermining the task that demands a stronger and healthier philosopher in the future. In particular, Nietzsche confesses in *Ecce Homo* that he himself, having been corrupted by nineteenth-century German "idealist" culture, is not strong enough to command the self-overcoming of humankind or healthy enough to affirm the eternal recurrence of his own life. Still, he is able to extrapolate from his own weaknesses and pathologies in order to envision what kind of future philosopher is required to do these things.[8] Indeed, he suggests, this very act of depicting the heir to his legacy might be sufficient to call forth this philosopher. Some exceptionally strong and healthy human beings in the future might be seduced into crowning themselves with the name "Zarathustra." So Nietzsche asked himself what would be the best literary means of luring these figures to his side. And his answer was that he should appropriate the most widely-read and intensely-studied book ever written – indeed, the very book that occasioned the invention of the printing press. Not only would he be able to count on his readers already knowing this book almost by heart, he would also be able to bypass the vagaries of academic fashion, intellectual squabbling, and ivory-tower obscurity. In addition, as Benedetta Zavatta explains in the opening chapter of this collection (Chapter 1), Nietzsche saw that this choice would allow him to expel from the Gospels the religious meanings of its original writers and infuse them instead with his own new philosophical meanings. For example, he has Zarathustra teach that Jesus' idea of turning the other cheek is actually inspired by vengeful motives and must be left behind if we are ever to overcome the spirit of revenge (*Z* I.19). What better way to seduce his readers away from the heart and soul of the Christian ascetic ideal and toward his new post-Christian goal of humankind's self-overcoming? Indeed, in the notes he wrote while composing *TSZ*, Nietzsche explains that his appropriation of Luther's linguistic style and of the poetic form of the Bible is what especially allows him to accomplish this seduction:

> Lastly: we [Germans] are still very *young*. Our last major event is still *Luther*, our only book is still the *Bible*. [. . .] For continual repetition ∪ ∪ etc. the rhythm of rhymed verse, *we* are musically too sophisticated (aside from misunderstood hexameter!) How beneficial the poetic form of Platen and Hölderlin has been to us already! But much too strict for us! Playing with the most diverse meters and occasionally unmetrical verse is the right thing: the freedom that we have achieved already in music through

[8] For further discussion of this point, see Loeb (2021a).

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> R⟨ichard⟩W⟨agner⟩! we can certainly take this for our poetry! In the final analysis: it is the only kind of poetry that speaks strongly to our hearts! Thanks to Luther! [. . .] The language of Luther and the poetic form of the Bible as the basis for a new German *poetry*: this is *my* invention! Making things classical, the rhyme scheme is all wrong and does not speak profoundly enough to us: not even Wagner's alliteration! (*KSA* 11:25 [162, 172 173]; *CWFN* 2021: 50)[9]

Returning now to the list of standard complaints about Nietzsche's book, we can see that they depend on various misunderstandings. Students of Nietzsche's philosophy will not find what he thinks are his most important insights anywhere outside of *TSZ*. These insights are not in any way superseded by what he wrote in his later works. In fact, he tells us, these later works are all merely critical and skeptical analyses that pose questions and problems that await their resolution in the ideas he had already presented in *TSZ*. Scholars often cite Nietzsche's remarks that his later works say the same things as *TSZ*, although very differently (*EH* "Destiny" 8; *KSB* 7: 754), but he does not mean by this that *TSZ* says the same things as these later works. And in fact it does not, because the two most important ideas in this book – the self-overcoming of humankind and the eternal recurrence of the same[10] – are not revisited again in the texts written afterward (they are only mentioned or alluded to).[11] Again, this does not mean, as some scholars have supposed, that Nietzsche abandoned these ideas after completing *TSZ*.[12] Instead, he held them in reserve for readers to study once they had digested his devastating critique of their most cherished modern dogmas. These two central ideas can best be understood by philosophical readers who take the time and the

[9] See also *BGE* 247: "The masterpiece of German prose is therefore, fairly enough, the masterpiece of its greatest preacher: the *Bible* has so far been the best German book. Compared with Luther's Bible almost everything else is mere 'literature'—something that did not grow in Germany and therefore also did not grow and does not grow into German hearts: as the Bible did" (*BGE* 1989).

[10] Recently, it has become common practice for scholars to rest their whole interpretation of eternal recurrence on the mere preview of this doctrine that Nietzsche offered in a single paragraph of *The Joyful Science* (*JS* 341). See Loeb (2013, 2022) for a critique of this attempt to avoid discussing the book-long treatment of this doctrine in *TSZ*. See also Loeb (2010, 2015b) for a commentary on *TSZ* that shows how eternal recurrence informs not just Zarathustra's teachings about this doctrine but also the chronological narrative of the book as a whole.

[11] By contrast, Nietzsche's later texts do include a substantial, and in some respects more sophisticated, treatment of the other most important idea in *Zarathustra*, the will to power. See Loeb (2015a).

[12] For a critique of the interpretive suggestion that Nietzsche has Zarathustra abandon his ideal of the *Übermensch* as the narrative of *TSZ* progresses and that this ideal plays no role in the works he wrote after *TSZ*, see Loeb (2010, 169 n. 37, 203–206, and Chapter 8). See also Part IV of *TSZ* (*Z*.13: 2, 3, 5) and *EH* ("Books" *Z* 6, *Z* 8, and "Destiny" 5).

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trouble to study his use of the New Testament as a literary model, just as they take the time and the trouble to learn about his philosophical engagement with Schopenhauer and the neo-Kantians, or about his philological study of the history and culture of Ancient Greece. Biblical exegetes have offered persuasive interpretations of Jesus' life and teachings, and so Nietzsche encourages us to do the same with his presentation of Zarathustra's life and teachings. And just as these interpretations of the New Testament are supposed to uncover fundamental truths, so too Nietzsche expects us to find deep truths in his own fifth Gospel: "[W]hat is more important is that Zarathustra is more truthful than any other thinker. His teaching, and his alone, has truthfulness as the supreme virtue" (*EH* "Destiny" 3). There is no use in disgruntled scholars complaining about the perceived difficulty of *TSZ*, or about their lack of talent or expertise for dealing with the complex literary strategies employed in this book, or even about the aesthetic displeasure they feel when studying this book. If our goal is to achieve a complete and proper understanding of Nietzsche's contributions to philosophy, we have no choice but to accept his demand that we master his prized *Zarathustra* text.

Summary of The Essays

In keeping with the points just made, it is noteworthy that half of the essays collected in this volume are concerned with the two central ideas of *TSZ* that are not treated officially, or at length, anywhere else in Nietzsche's published corpus: eternal recurrence and the *Übermensch*. Paul Katsafanas, Matthew Meyer, and Paul S. Loeb concentrate on the former, Scott Jenkins on the latter, and Paul Franco and Gabriel Zamosc on both. Also, in keeping with the state of philosophical discussion today, it is noteworthy that half of the essays in this volume explore Nietzsche's metaphilosophical commitments in *TSZ*. Benedetta Zavatta outlines Nietzsche's design of *TSZ* as a new kind of philosophical critique, Matthew Meyer, Paul S. Loeb, and Kaitlyn Creasy reflect on Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism in *TSZ*, while Keith Ansell-Pearson and Marta Faustino jointly investigate Nietzsche's idea in *TSZ* that philosophy should be practiced as a way of life.[13]

Zavatta's chapter opens our collection with a discussion of the parodic and satirical aspects of Nietzsche's book. Scholars have heeded Nietzsche's

[13] For a recent collection of essays on Nietzsche's metaphilosophy, see Loeb and Meyer (Cambridge University Press, 2019).

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instruction that we should think of *TSZ* as a kind of parody (*GS* P), but there has been a great deal of uncertainty about what exactly he means by this. Zavatta helpfully clears up the debate by surveying the genres of literary and musical parody prior to Nietzsche's time and showing how he appropriated these genres in *TSZ* so as to invent a new form of philosophical critique. His central insight, she argues, is that the target of criticism – in this case, the principal text of the Christian tradition – can be imitated and modified in such a way that its original flawed meanings are expelled from within and replaced with new legitimate meanings. Those who have been corrupted by the original text will bring to the imitation all the same fervor they had invested in the original text and this will help them to process the criticism, move away from their commitment to the original flawed meanings, and more easily come to accept the new legitimate meanings. This new conception of philosophy as a kind of parodical re-coding is an affirmative critical weapon that can be usefully deployed against many other kinds of targets besides the Christian worldview. Or it can even be aimed from a different perspective entirely, as for example in Luce Irigaray's feminist re-coding of *TSZ* in her *Marine Lover of Friedrich Nietzsche* (Irigaray 1991).

Ansell-Pearson and Faustino also emphasize the aesthetic design of Nietzsche's book. Building on Pierre Hadot's influential reminder that thinkers in the ancient world used to practice philosophy as a total way of life, they show that Nietzsche was inspired by these precursors to craft *TSZ* as a narrative exemplification and personification of this ideal. In their view, Nietzsche presents his performative book as a crucial intervention in an age when professionalized philosophy has become a merely theoretical and contemplative exercise that is textually propagated by university-dwelling scholarly specialists who have little interest in the kind of commitment to knowledge and wisdom that would transform them and their lives. Nietzsche knew that the philosophical texts he wrote in his own voice could be easily assimilated into this bloodless academic culture, so he deliberately designed a new kind of philosophical text that would resist any such assimilation. His fictional protagonist actually practices philosophy as a way of life and this is shown by the narrative of his transformative travels; his fully lived pedagogical relationships with his beloved disciples; his self-imposed solitude wherein he gains wisdom and experiences deep personal crises as a result; his fully embodied sensory communion with the natural world around him; and his joyful determination to live dangerously in order to shape the destiny of humankind. Instead of just arguing that philosophy should be practiced as a way of life, Nietzsche writes a new

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kind of philosophy book that dramatically models this practice and hopes to provoke a radical spiritual conversion in its readers. This innovation has had a far-reaching impact, inspiring for example Sartre's *Nausea*, Camus' *The Stranger*, and Hesse's *The Glass Bead Game*.

In the next two essays, Katsafanas and Janaway discuss a major theoretical and practical question that was introduced by Plato at the very start of the history of philosophy – is life worth living, and if so, why? Schopenhauer followed Plato in providing a negative answer to this question. But Nietzsche opposes both of them and is therefore confronted with the task of refuting the grounds of their negative answer while at the same time offering compelling support for Zarathustra's resounding affirmative answer at the end of the published *TSZ* (*Z* III.16). In *Twilight of the Idols*, Nietzsche points out that our answer to this question cannot be objective since the living are an interested party (*TI* "Socrates" 2). So he interprets the negative answers of Plato and Schopenhauer as symptoms of degenerating life and his own affirmative answer as a symptom of ascending life. The real question, then, is what makes life worth living for *ascending* life? Nietzsche's answer is what he calls life's self-overcoming, that is, living beings creating something that will surpass them (*Z* II.12). Thus, the meaning of Nietzsche's own ascending life was to create the superior type, Zarathustra, who teaches that the meaning of ascending human life in general is to create a superior species, the *Übermensch*. However, this emphasis on creative perfectionism raises two problems, both of which are confronted directly in *TSZ*, and both of which are supposed to be solved through the thought of eternal recurrence.

The first problem, according to Katsafanas, is the tendency to negate what presently exists in favor of an imagined future ideal. This tendency is dramatized in Zarathustra's overwhelming urge to be rid of the rabble and the small human (*Z* II.6; *Z* III.13). At the same time, however, Nietzsche insists that life-affirmation should be unconditional, meaning that it should not depend on the possibility of removing objectionable elements from life. This is why Zarathustra needs the thought of life's eternal recurrence. Since all such objectionable elements must eternally recur as the same, his attitude to this thought serves to reveal any conditionality in his claim to affirm life. Zarathustra must seek to affirm the eternal recurrence of life because only in this way will he be pursuing his higher values while at the same time affirming life as it is actually lived in the present moment. The second problem, according to Janaway, is that the unchangeable past appears to overwhelm the future in such a way that it is impossible for us to create anything new. This is the meaning of that key

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moment in *TSZ* where Zarathustra is devastated by the pessimistic teaching that all is empty, all is the same, all has been (*Z* II.19). If he cannot creatively transform the present-day human into his envisioned future superhuman, Zarathustra loses his reason for living. But then he awakens his dormant thought of eternal recurrence and realizes that he can in fact create the past from the perspective of the present moment. Given the thought of eternal recurrence, the past is no longer closed and hence the future remains open too. In both of these essays, another window is opened onto Nietzsche's stylistic choice for TSZ, namely, as a kind of *Bildungsroman* in which the protagonist must overcome major external and internal impediments on the way to fulfilling his destiny.

Matthew Meyer and Paul S. Loeb both discuss the intensely debated topic of Nietzsche's philosophical naturalism, but they approach it in different ways. For Meyer the key is Nietzsche's study of Schopenhauer, while for Loeb the crucial text is Nietzsche's *JS* 109. For Meyer Nietzsche's argument has to do with completing the project of naturalism that Schopenhauer thinks cannot be completed, whereas for Loeb the argument has to do with removing anthropomorphic projective errors from our concept of nature. Meyer and Loeb both think that Nietzsche's naturalism in *TSZ* leads him to endorse the truth of cosmological eternal recurrence, but they have different interpretations of what he takes to be the implication of this truth. According to Meyer, this truth entails for Nietzsche a kind of fatalism that leads us beyond a morality of good and evil and beyond the conception of agency that underlies this morality. By contrast, Loeb think that this truth entails for Nietzsche a solution to the problem of radical flux and a means of curing the human feeling of impotence and spirit of revenge that is provoked by this radical flux. Given these different conclusions, Meyer and Loeb also have different understandings of the aesthetic design of *TSZ*. Meyer thinks that Nietzsche constructed a narrative in which Zarathustra comes to abandon his non-naturalized conception of himself and his agency, thereby attaining a childlike state of innocence beyond good and evil. Loeb, on the other hand, claims that Zarathustra gains an even stronger sense of agency because his new understanding of the reality of circular time enables him to have a causal influence on the past – an influence which is embodied and displayed in the chronological narrative of TSZ.

Neil Sinhababu and Scott Jenkins are both interested in showing the significance of *TSZ* for today's philosophical work in moral psychology. According to Sinhababu, this book is the only place where we can find Nietzsche's most compelling critique of the rationalist idea that reason is

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independent of the passions and constitutes a person's true self as well as the ground of his virtue. Through a close examination of two chapters from the start of *TSZ*, Sinhababu shows how Nietzsche defends the Humean claim (as perhaps absorbed from his reading of Schopenhauer) that the bodily passions use reason as their tool and constitute a person's self and virtues. He also shows how Nietzsche anticipates and rebuts the recently influential counterarguments of Christine Korsgaard and John McDowell. In Sinhababu's analysis, Nietzsche would have rejected Korsgaard's unified agent requirement and would have argued that the phenomenology of bodily passions is sufficient to explain McDowell's idea of perceptual saliences. In the next essay, Jenkins concentrates on the specific passion of self-contempt that plays such a large role in the Prologue of Nietzsche's book where the *Übermensch* is introduced. This evaluative emotional state sounds unpleasant and unhealthy, but Jenkins shows why Nietzsche recommends it as a distinctive self-critical stance that is actually grounded in true self-love. We must be careful, Jenkins says, not to confuse it with the two familiar varieties of contempt discussed by Nietzsche, noble indifference and moral vengefulness. Instead, we should regard it as Nietzsche's secular transposition of religious-ascetic contempt. Here we take a critical attitude toward our present state as falling short of a superior future ideal that lies within us, which we love and yearn to realize. This is why Zarathustra says, paradoxically, that he loves humans and wants them to perish for the sake of a superior *Übermensch* species.

The last three chapters in this Critical Guide have to do with philosophical questions and issues that are the subject of controversy in the areas of applied ethics and political theory. According to Paul Franco, Nietzsche constructed *TSZ* as a political drama in which the protagonist overcomes his reluctance to rule and accepts his political responsibility. His reluctance to rule springs from his compassion for the suffering that his disciples will have to endure as a result of his teaching. And his political responsibility is to teach eternal recurrence as a cultivating philosophical idea that creates a new ruling class that will help bring about his goal of the *Übermensch* – a collective goal that will rescue modern Europe from its nihilistic democratic trajectory. In this essay, Franco explains how Nietzsche's "great" politics presents a radical challenge to our usual assumptions about the need for a shared political life and for politics in the mundane and institutional sense. In the next essay, Gabriel Zamosc argues that a proper understanding of *TSZ* will help to advance the contemporary transhumanist movement that often claims to be inspired by Nietzsche's philosophy of the *Übermensch*. According to Zamosc, Zarathustra warns us against

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falsely or sickly transcendent versions of his superhuman ideal that are actually a veiled hatred of our unchangeable human-all-too-human past. Indeed, this is why he teaches eternal recurrence, in order to show us how to love this past as an embodiment of our creative will to power. The transhumanist movement must therefore incorporate this doctrine so as to secure a joyful version of itself that embraces our transitional destiny of forever remaining mere bridges to the superhuman. Finally, in the concluding essay of this volume, Kaitlyn Creasy broadens the scope of this political and ethical discussion to include what *TSZ* has to say about how we should relate to the ecosphere in which we live. According to Creasy, *TSZ* is the work in which Nietzsche's most fully presents his proto-ecocentric vision for humanity's re-naturalization. What she means by this is Nietzsche's call for us to develop an ecological conscience: that is, to attune ourselves to the other-than-human world so that we may come to know ourselves better as natural beings and in that way identify and pursue the kinds of tasks that will most empower us and allow us to affirm life in its totality. This vision, she argues, can make important contributions to contemporary environmental philosophy and policy, especially as a critique of those anthropocentric frameworks and ideologies according to which the natural world has merely instrumental value (for example, as a resource).

In this Critical Guide, then, readers will find a multi-faceted Nietzsche. He is an immanent critic of the Christian worldview, a teacher of philosophy as a way of life, a life-affirming anti-pessimist, a philosophical naturalist, a philosopher of time, a moral psychologist, a political theorist, an early transhumanist, and an environmental thinker. This wide variety of roles is in keeping with the multi-faceted aesthetic style of *TSZ*, the book he spent the longest time writing. As we have seen, this text is parody and satire, imitative pedagogy, *Bildungsroman*, agential narrative, chronological puzzle, psychology manual, self-enhancing futuristic ideal, political drama, transfiguring experience, and a poetic paean to the earth. We shouldn't think that this book's aesthetic form can be reduced to any one of these categories or even to just these categories. Nor should we rigidly expect that any one of these forms is inseparable from the philosophical content or indispensable for understanding this content. What matters instead is that we approach Nietzsche's book as a philosophical resource that has much to teach us in whatever way we are best inclined to learn from it.

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CHAPTER 1

Laughter As Weapon
Parody and Satire in Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Benedetta Zavatta

1.1 Introduction

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is a work of philosophy presented in the form of a fictional narration. It is a prose work. But due to the pervasive use of such rhythmic devices as assonance and alliteration, along with rhetorical figures, the prose in which it is written is very close to poetry. Moreover, woven into the text of *Zarathustra* are many arduously decipherable images and symbols. Indeed, the book as a whole is composed of the most various elements, such as parables, visions, dreams, songs, and so on. *Zarathustra* is a text that cannot be appreciated, and engaged with, if one comes to it with the expectation that it must conform to the argument-based style of doing philosophy that is the norm in the academic practice of philosophy. The consequence of this has been that the book has tended to play only a marginal role in research on, and teaching of, Nietzsche. As Robert Pippin notes in his introduction to the volume of the Cambridge University Press edition containing *Zarathustra*, it appears only rarely on reading lists in university courses dealing with Nietzsche (Pippin 2006: xiii). Indeed, leading commentators on Nietzsche have often shown themselves only too eager to bury this particular work in their overviews of the philosopher's production. In the introduction to his large tome on Nietzsche, Richard Schacht declares that he has deliberately neglected, in this monumental synoptic review of the philosopher's work, the literary experiments, "including not only his many epigrams, 'songs,' and poems, but also his most famous work, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*" (Schacht 1983: xiii–xiv). At best *Zarathustra* has tended to be read as a work of philosophy whose philosophical sense can be extracted, with some effort, from beneath its bizarre form and its even more bizarre use of language.[1]

[1] See Hollingdale (1973: 73), and Fleischer (1993: 90).

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But to marginalize in this way, let alone outright to exclude, *Zarathustra* from research and from university teaching would not only be to disparage the personal judgment of Nietzsche, who famously considered it his "best" book (*KSB* 6: 370, 372) and hoped to see, one day, "chairs and professorships" specifically devoted to its study (*KGB* III7/1: 506a); it would also, and above all, be to deprive ourselves of a book that is in fact the "single most important, comprehensive work of the mature Nietzsche of the 1880s" (Pippin 1988: 45). It is an equally serious error to try to separate the philosophical thoughts contained in this work from the form in which they are presented and to strip away the latter so as to better focus one's attention on the former. As Ferruccio Masini has rightly observed, in order to correctly interpret *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* we must accept that, in this work, "the form *is* the content" (Masini 1973: 276; see also Zittel 2011: 16). That is to say, we must grasp the necessary connection tying these two elements to one another and, starting from this connection, work our way back to Nietzsche's fundamental intentions in this book.

1.2 "Incipit tragoedia," ergo "incipit parodia"

Nietzsche does not provide us with many elements with which to construct a correct interpretation of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He really gives us just a single piece of information to work with, albeit a precious one reiterated at several points. It is that the idea of "the eternal recurrence of the same" forms "the fundamental conception of the book" (*EH Z*:1).[2] This thought, as Lampert recognizes, is "the thought for which the book exists" (Lampert 1986: 140). In *Ecce Homo* the thought of eternal recurrence is defined as "the highest possible formula of affirmation" (*EH Z*:1) and, a little later in the same passage, Nietzsche explains that the spirit which pervaded him during the period in which he conceived *Zarathustra* was that "*affirmative* pathos *par excellence*" which, so Nietzsche goes on, "I have named the tragic pathos" (*EH Z*:1). We must, then, try to clear up the question of just what it is that is affirmed in the notion of eternal recurrence and in just what way this affirmation is linked to the "tragic pathos" that Nietzsche refers to.

As D'Iorio (2010) has noted, the "thought-experiment" of imagining one's own life repeating itself over and over, identical each time in every detail, was a *topos* often adopted in the "pessimistic" philosophical

[2] The following translations are used in this chapter: *A* (2005); *BT* (1999); *D* (1997); *EH* (2005); *GS* (2001); *TI* (2005); *Z* (2006).

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literature of Nietzsche's era as a way of engendering a view of human life – even of the life of the most fortunate human beings – as an intolerable burden. In other words, where there is placed in prospect the eternal recurrence of everything, over and over without the slightest change, life loses all possibility of redemption and reveals itself to be completely aimless and meaningless. This sufficed, for pessimists like Schopenhauer and Leopardi, as grounds for denying all value to human life.[3] The new perspective introduced by Nietzsche is that it is conceivable that this prospect of an "eternal recurrence of the same" might also be a prospect welcomed and joyfully embraced; or, in other words, that it is possible to affirm the value of life even when there has been stripped away from it all idealizing falsifications, such as the notion of life's having a final "purpose" or "aim." This is why Nietzsche defines the thought of eternal recurrence as "the highest possible formula of affirmation": it is the supreme affirmation of life because it occurs in the face of conditions which would incline most people rather to deny and refuse life.

Nietzsche describes the state of mind in which there is pronounced the joyful "'yes' to life" that he has in mind as a "*tragic pathos*" because it is precisely in Greek tragedy – or rather in the Dionysiac spirit from which Greek tragedy originates – that he discovered for the first time a disposition suitable for affirming life as it is, despite all the suffering inevitably contained in it. Dionysiac art, Nietzsche tells us in the "Attempt at Self-Criticism" which he added as a preface to the second (1886) edition of *The Birth of Tragedy*, has its origins "in strength, in overbrimming health, in an excess of plenitude" and these things form the prerequisite for being able to say "yes" to life notwithstanding "all that is fearsome, wicked, annihilating and fateful at the very foundations of existence." What swept away the "tragic" vision of existence developed by the Greeks was "the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence," which reached its culmination in the doctrine of Christianity. "Behind this way of thinking and evaluating," Nietzsche goes on to say in the 1886 "Attempt at Self-Criticism," "I had ... always felt its *hostility to life*, a furious, vengeful enmity toward life itself." Behind the "belief in 'another' or 'better' life" Nietzsche reads an explicit will-to-death (*BT* "Attempt" 5). Instead of this "no" to life uttered by Christianity, Zarathustra – whom Nietzsche describes on more than one occasion (for example, at *BT* "Attempt" 7) as precisely a "Dionysiac monster," in other words, as bearer of a specifically "tragic" wisdom – aspires, on the contrary, to create conditions such

[3] On the antecedents of the doctrine of eternal return, see D'Iorio (2010) and Zavatta (2019: 50f.).

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that life, stripped of all falsifying idealization, may still be embraced with an affirming "yes."[4] According to the book by Hellwald, *Culturgeschichte in ihrer natürlichen Entwicklung bis zur Gegenwart* (1875), which Nietzsche was reading in the summer of 1881 when he chose Zarathustra as the protagonist of his own book, the Persian wise man Zarathustra, or Zoroaster, was the first to introduce "the illusion [*Wahngebilde*] of a moral order in the world" (Hellwald 1875:128; D'Iorio 2000). The idea at the basis of the book follows directly on from this: Nietzsche imagines Zarathustra returning to earth to correct the error that he had committed in propagating this "illusion" and to wipe from the face of existence this moral perspective (*EH* "Destiny" 3).[5]

That Nietzsche's intention with *Zarathustra* was to restore "tragic pathos", in other words, the capacity to affirm the value of life even once life has been stripped of all metaphysical consolations, can also be gleaned from aphorism 342 of *The Gay Science*. This aphorism, the last in the edition of 1882, anticipates almost word for word the first section of the Prologue of *Zarathustra* and is entitled, very significantly, *Incipit Tragoedia*. However, what may surprise or even baffle the modern reader is that in *Zarathustra* Nietzsche makes use of a textual strategy which, in Nietzsche's own era at least, was generally classified rather as a subgenre of the comic, namely, parody.[6] In the preface to the second (1886) edition of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche issues a sort of interpretative *caveat* to his readers: "*Incipit tragoedia*, we read at the end of this suspiciously innocent book. Beware! Something utterly wicked and mischievous is being announced here: *incipit parodia*, no doubt" (*GS* P:1, 4). From these remarks of Nietzsche's we can infer that he envisaged parody and tragedy

[4] What Nietzsche aspires to with *Zarathustra* is, needless to say, not simply a return to a culture like that of the ancient Greeks. Once he had lost his faith in Wagner and Wagner's cultural project, it became clear to Nietzsche that such a return to the past was neither possible nor indeed to be wished for (see *KSA* 8:5[156]). Rather, the aim that Nietzsche sets for himself with the notion of eternal return is that of making possible new styles of life and new values which affirm and embrace life as it is.

[5] With a view to sweeping away the moral interpretation of existence Zarathustra attacks above all the Christian vision of the world. But this is not his only target. His polemics are directed also against the Western metaphysical tradition that begins with Plato and also against certain contemporary political tendencies such as socialism.

[6] Hatab notes that today we normally consider "tragic" and "comic" as two opposite states, the former characterized by a negative situation, which will in turn tend to give rise to a negative state of mind, and the latter characterized by a positive situation giving rise to a positive state of mind (Hatab 1988: 68). For the ancient Greeks, however, both tragedy and comedy were to be situated under the sign of the "Dionysian" and were thus intimately linked to one another: "For the Greeks, tragedy and comedy expressed a two-sided affirmative response to negation, limits, and finitude" (Hatab 1988: 67).

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as being, in his *Zarathustra*, inextricably linked. The thesis I intend to advance here is that the choice of the textual strategy of parody is no mere whim on Nietzsche's part, but rather something perfectly expedient to the overcoming of the Christian worldview, to the restoration of "tragic *pathos*," and thus to the creation of the conditions required in order to explore new styles of life freed of both Christian morality and metaphysics.

1.3 *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as Parody of the New Testament

There exists no universal definition of "parody" since this latter is a literary genre that has, down the centuries, assumed a whole series of different forms and functions (Dentith 2000: 21; Hutcheon 2000: 10). Nevertheless, the common denominator between the various theories which have succeeded one another throughout history might be summed up as follows: parody involves appropriating the form and the stylistic features of an existing text, emptying these latter of their original content, and adapting them in such a way that they convey a new content different from the initial one and indeed in many cases critical and even directly oppositional to it. Parody, then, might be said to be a way of dialoguing with, while simultaneously freeing oneself from, an existing tradition, inasmuch as, in parody, the past is at the same time re-evoked and shown up as something that must be overcome.[7] Despite the fact that one finds in *Zarathustra* almost innumerable critical allusions to problems and authors belonging to the Western philosophical tradition, the book is nonetheless clearly recognizable as a parody of the Bible (Löwith 1997: 102). Specifically, the many allusions to the life and person of Christ, the fact that Zarathustra speaks in parables addressed to disciples, and many other textual details, mean that, among the numerous books and texts that make up the Biblical canon, it is the New Testament that is by far most frequently and constantly referenced here by Nietzsche. Indeed, Nietzsche himself confirms that he intended *Zarathustra* to be read and received as an "anti-gospel" or "counter-gospel", describing its manuscript version (albeit in ironical tone) as a "fifth gospel" in a letter addressed to his

[7] "Parody," from the Greek παρῳδία, suggests the idea of a song or an ode "sung in imitation of another" (Rose 1993: 8). The notion of imitation, in turn, implies repetition involving a moment of difference: according to Householder, the basic sense of "*parodos*," to parody, is "singing in imitation, singing with a slight change" (Householder 1944: 2). Lelièvre too (1954: 66) confirms this interpretation, defining the verb "*parodon*" as "singing after the style of an original but with a difference." Within the notion of "parody," then, there are comprised both the notion of "nearness" and that of "opposition."

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publisher Schmeitzner in 1883 (*KSB* 6: 375). He also refers to the book, in a note of 1886, as his "*Zarathustra-Evangelium*" (*KSA* 12:6[4]).[8]

As we have already noted above, in Nietzsche's era parody was generally considered to be a subgenre of comic writing and a decidedly inferior literary form the products of which could not possibly aspire to anything like the same degree of artistic dignity as the parodied originals.[9] As Gilman (1975, 2001) has pointed out, however, Nietzsche was significantly marked and formed, in his earliest years, by the influence of certain "parodistic" practices which had flourished in nineteenth-century German music and which had involved the executing of re-elaborative variations on an existing musical prototype. Significantly, all comedic intent is absent from this type of parody and the musical artefacts arising from it aspire to be of equal artistic value with the original compositions. The musical parody, then, can be defined as "a mode of continuing and altering the prototype through variations on the musical structure of the original" (Gilman 2001: 18). One key example cited by Gilman is the *contrafactum*, a subgenre of musical parody that flourished in the nineteenth century and consisted in "a religious restructuring of a secular song" in which "the melody [was] preserved ... and the words ... altered" (Gilman 2001: 18).[10] Taking such *contrafacta* as his models and points of reference, Nietzsche tried his hand at creating, during his later schoolboy years at Schulpforta, parodies of Goethe, Eichendorff, and other Romantic poets.

[8] See also Sloterdijk (2013), who holds that Nietzsche, in order to spread his "Good News," decided to write a book that could be perceived as a formal extension of the Gospel, but with antithetical content: substantially, a parody (Sloterdijk 2013: 32). "But Nietzsche," adds Sloterdijk, "did not want to be a mere Gospel parodist: he did not want merely to synthesize Luther with the dithyramb and swap Mosaic tablets for Zarathustrian ones" (32). Rather, with *Zarathustra* Nietzsche wanted to free language "from the inhibitions with which resentment, itself coded by metaphysics, had stamped it" (33). To overcome the language of metaphysics, which denigrates the world and human beings (33), Nietzsche invented new "strategies of expression" (31) that were finally "decoupled" from metaphysics and able to disclose the "eulogistic" power of language (35).

[9] This way of understanding parody relies on Schiller's notion of comedy and the comic. Schiller addresses, in his aesthetics, not just the categories of the "beautiful" and the "sublime" but also those of the "coarse" and the "low." For Schiller the "low" possesses no aesthetic dignity; it can find its place in art only by virtue of its aptitude to provoke laughter. Parody, he argues, consists precisely in the presentation of objects and actions that are "inherently coarse" or in the parodist's treating objects and actions "in a low manner" with the sole aim of giving rise to laughter (Gilman 2001: 7–8).

[10] The Goethean conception of parody, which is opposed to the Schillerian one, presents, in fact, similar characteristics to the musical notion exemplified in the *contrafactum*. As Gilman recognizes, however, this Goethean conception was probably unknown to Nietzsche whereas it was hardly possible for him not to know the musical parody (Gilman 2001: 18).

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These parodies, like the *contrafacta* from which the young Nietzsche drew his inspiration, did not set out to provoke laughter but rather simply to reinterpret, in a new key, certain themes of the original model. Indeed, the aim was to achieve a result that was aesthetically valuable in its own right (Gilman 2001:17). I am of the view that, despite Nietzsche's having experimented with this type of non-comedic parody only during his secondary-school years at Schulpforta, he continued nonetheless also at later periods, when comic effect had become an integral part of his notion of the parodic, to understand his parodic literary productions not as mere denigrations of the noble works they parodied but rather as works of art potentially on the same aesthetic level. This is certainly the case with *Zarathustra*. Although it is possible to assign it to the genre of parody, it is described by Nietzsche as his "masterpiece" by virtue of the high aesthetic level he believed he had attained due to his meticulous work on the book's language.[11] Moreover, Nietzsche aimed to produce an existential impact on the world comparable to that of the great work *Zarathustra* parodies: the New Testament itself. From letters written to his friends we learn that Nietzsche intended to bring about an epoch-making revolution through this work, one that would "split the history of humanity into two halves" (*KSB* 6: 494).[12] For this reason, Higgins' interpretation, whereby *Zarathustra* can be considered a sort of "comic book" and legitimately assigned to the genre of "tragi-comedy" (Higgins 1987: 5), seems to me untenable. Rather, as Griffin emphasizes, one would need, in order to define *Zarathustra*, to coin a new literary genre altogether. This could be called "*parotragoedia*" (Griffin 1994: 339) since, in this work, Nietzsche uses comic parody to express his "*deepest seriousness* [tiefster Ernst]" and "*entire philosophy*" (*KSB* 6: 427).

As compared to the notion of parody developed by Nietzsche in his youth, the parodistic literary practices of Nietzsche's mature years – and exemplified by *Zarathustra* in particular – are distinguished by the addition of two further elements, namely: comic effect and critical function. We need, then, to draw into the equation a second important influence on

[11] Nietzsche writes, for example, on 22nd of February, 1884 to his friend Rohde of how he "fancies that, with this *Zarathustra*, [he has] brought the German language to a state of consummate perfection" (*KSB* 6: 490).

[12] In one such letter he speaks of how "disgusted" he feels at the idea that *Zarathustra* might be received by the reading public as a "book intended just to entertain [*Unterhaltungsbuch*]" (*KSB* 6: 401). See also *KSB* 6: 402, 471.

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Nietzsche's appreciation, and deployment, of parody. This is the influence exercised by Schopenhauer. In his "Theory of the Ludicrous" contained in *The World As Will and Representation*, Schopenhauer describes the genesis of the comical in the following terms: "the origin of the ludicrous is always the paradoxical, and thus unexpected, subsumption of an object under a concept that is in other respects heterogeneous to it" (Schopenhauer 1958: 91). Laughter, then, signifies the perception of an incongruity between concept and object. The greater and more unexpected this incongruity is, the more violent will be the laughter. "In everything that excites laughter," writes Schopenhauer, "it must always be possible to show a concept and a particular: that is to say, a thing or event which can of course be subsumed under that concept yet . . . in another . . . respect . . . differs strikingly from everything else thought through that concept" (Schopenhauer 1958: 92). Our imagination, Schopenhauer explains, creates an ideal, theoretical instance of a thing falling under the concept in question and this theoretical instance conflicts with the instance actually perceived; out of this conflict there arises a sense of incongruity; and out of the incongruity there arises laughter.[13] Parody, which Schopenhauer understands as a subgenre of comedy, takes advantage of just this mechanism. It consists "in substituting for the incidents and words of a serious poem or drama insignificant, inferior persons, or petty motives and actions. It therefore subsumes the plain realities it sets forth under the lofty concepts given in the theme, under which in a certain respect they must now fit, whereas in other respects they are very incongruous therewith" (Schopenhauer 1958: 95).

This is precisely the dynamic by means of which Nietzsche executes his parody of the New Testament. As Pippin has observed, in Part I Zarathustra's discourses are directed principally against types of behaviour that are typically Christian, whereas the discourses of Part II appear to be directed against types of human beings who prove to be personifications or incarnations of certain typically Christian attitudes (Pippin 2006: 48). The comic effect arises out of the contrast between, on the one hand, the exalted concepts and types evoked by Zarathustra and, on the other, the "human, all too human" – that is to say, low and coarse – forms in which these concepts and types find real incarnation. Let us consider, for example, the passage *On the Sublime Ones:*

[13] In turn, Schopenhauer draws on Kant, considered to be "the father of the 'incongruity theory' of laughter" (Weeks 2004: 3). In the *Critique of Judgment* Kant explains that laughter arises from a collision between "incompatible conceptual frameworks" (Weeks 2004: 3).

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> I saw a sublime one today, a solemn one, an ascetic of the spirit; oh how my soul laughed at his ugliness!
>
> With his chest sticking out like those who hold their breath he stood there, the sublime one, silently;
>
> Adorned with ugly truths, his hunter's spoils, and rich in tattered clothing; many thorns clung to him also but I saw nary a rose. (*Z*:II "Sublime")

Here Nietzsche is critiquing the Christian conception of virtue as a struggle against the animal passions present in the human being. The "sublime" individual, on the Schillerian view of things, is precisely the individual who has succeeded, through the force of reason, in restraining these passions (Schiller 1845: 243ff). But where we might have expected to behold a figure radiant with beauty, fulfilled and happy, Nietzsche shows us a man with torn clothes and a gaze made grim from having condemned a part of his own being as something wicked and as having inflicted mutilations on himself in the effort to root it out.

Another such case is the speech of Zarathustra entitled "On the Teachers of Virtue," in which Nietzsche parodies the famous "blessed are. . ." verses from the Sermon on the Mount that established all those virtues which were to become most central to Christianity (meekness, mercy, humility, "poverty in spirit"). Nietzsche imagines a paradoxical situation in which a wise man gathers listeners at his feet and urges them to practice just such virtues – but only because their practice is conducive to sound sleep. Here, the comic effect is generated by the contrast between the exalted concept of "virtue" and the base triviality of its realization in this case: as a mere remedy for insomnia.

1.4 Parody and the Overcoming of *Ressentiment*

Rather than try to identify and analyze all the passages in which parody is employed in the text of *Zarathustra*, it is surely more interesting to pose the question as to what function Nietzsche assigned to parody here and as to how it is connected with the essential aim of the work. Campioni (2000; 2018) argues that the whole of *Zarathustra* can be read as a sustained struggle against *ressentiment* and the spirit of revenge.[14] In the

[14] Also, in personal biographical terms Nietzsche can be said to have been attempting, through writing *Zarathustra*, to cleanse his soul of all those "impulses of revenge" and "*ressentiment*" (*KSB* 6: 457), which he himself recognized to have arisen in him after the deceit and betrayal he felt he had suffered at the hands of his friends Lou von Salomé and Paul Ree. In a letter to Overbeck, Nietzsche underlines the fact that such sentiments conflict profoundly with his philosophy and vision of the

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chapter, "On the Tarantulas," Zarathustra declares: "That mankind be redeemed from revenge: that, to me, is the bridge to the highest hope and a rainbow after long thunderstorms" (*Z*:II "Tarantulas"). Redemption from the spirit of revenge and from *ressentiment* is central to Nietzsche's book because it is in just such sentiments as these that the value system of Christian morality has its genesis.[15] One cannot consider oneself to have definitively overcome it, nor can any truly new values which might replace it emerge, until he or she has freed himself or herself from these feelings. Zarathustra himself is exposed, in the course of the eponymous narrative, to the temptation of *ressentiment* against which he struggles vigorously. This struggle is particularly evident in Part III. It is very philosophically significant that this should be so, given that it is in Part III that Zarathustra is slowly circling toward engagement with the thought of "eternal recurrence" (Pippin 1988: 59). Fundamental to the message of Part III is the parable "On Passing By," which describes Zarathustra's encounter with a "fool [*Narr*]" who has been completely taken over by a spirit of revenge and *ressentiment* against "the big city," in other words, against modernity. This "fool," significantly, is also "called by the people 'Zarathustra's ape.'" He represents a kind of *Doppelgänger* for Zarathustra, an inner adversary against whom he must always be on his guard. The "fool" does nothing but curse and hurl invectives, foaming with fury. But Zarathustra teaches him: "Where one can no longer love, there one should – *pass by!*" (*Z*:III "Passing By"). Invective is a form of critique – or rather, of accusation – driven by anger against someone: specifically by an anger that finds no physical outlet and that can, therefore, be called *ressentiment* in Nietzsche's sense of this term. In the discourse called "Before Sunrise" Zarathustra recounts how he too had once been a hater and had poured out all his hatred on everything and everyone that negated and devalued life. He then goes on to emphasize his self-overcoming, declaring: "I have [now] become a blesser and a Yes-sayer" (*Z*:III "Before Sunrise"). But when Zarathustra states that he has overcome his own *ressentiment* and become "a blesser" this does not mean that he has become innocuous.

world (*KSB* 6: 458). Significantly, we also find among the notes of 1883 the same affirmation repeated no less than three times: "Purification from revenge is *my* morality" (*KSA* 10:9[49], see also *KSA* 10:12[42] and *KSA* 10:13[20]).

[15] See also Sloterdijk (2013: 33), who maintains that Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is aimed at an overcoming of resentment, intended as "a mode of production of the world" (33). In other words, Nietzsche sees resentment lying at the basis of everything that up to now has been called culture, religion, and morality. His "fifth Gospel," Sloterdijk states, "take(s) a stand against the millenarian-old forces of reversal, against everything that has been called Gospel to date" (37) and praises "affirmation as liberation of the wholeness of life" (38).

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On the contrary: it is only now that he succeeds in becoming truly efficacious in the task of dismantling and destroying the Christian vision of the world. This is because he has now left off blaming and accusing and begun to focus rather on himself and on his own task. He "kills" only involuntarily, in the course of affirming his own self.

In order better to understand the importance of this indirect manner of annihilating, it is useful to recall the discourse "On the Three Metamorphoses" in Part I of the book, in which Nietzsche describes allegorically the path that needs to be taken in order to overcome Christian morality and make oneself a creator of new values. Significantly, the highest point in this evolution of the spirit is represented by a child. We may detect in this detail a parody of Christ's exhortation to his disciples to "become like little children" if they are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven (*Matthew* 18:1–5). Just as children are completely dependent on adults, Christians are called upon to make themselves humble and recognize their absolute dependence on God. In sharp contrast to this, the path of spiritual evolution described by Nietzsche in the "Three Metamorphoses" passage is one which leads individuals toward emancipation from all authority and toward greatness, understood as the full realization of their own individual nature. The child personifies the final stage in the process of overcoming of Christian morality because he sets forth his personal values in a manner completely oblivious to all that which is going on around him. Children are completely focussed on themselves and on their game: the game of creation. What one creates in this spirit proceeds solely from the affirmation of one's own nature and not from opposition to something or someone different from oneself. If, in order to affirm his own self, the creator of new values destroys something, he does so with just this childlike, absolute disregard and thus with an entirely good conscience.[16]

Parody, unlike invective, is perfectly compatible with this new condition since it is not born out of hatred or the wish for revenge. The reality described is inevitably disqualified and cancelled out once it is revealed that

[16] See Zavatta (2019:106f.) The figure of the child presented in the discourse "On the Three Metamorphoses" corresponds to an ideal which Nietzsche also describes in aphorism 382 of *The Gay Science*. This is "the ideal of a spirit that plays naively, in other words not deliberately but from overflowing abundance and power, with everything that was hitherto called holy, good, untouchable, divine." There corresponds to this attitude a "human, superhuman well-being and benevolence." This means that, when one destroys, one does not do so with hatred but rather with that childlike nonchalance and absolute good conscience to which we have just referred. Such an ideal also resembles the Heraclitean child that Nietzsche describes in *PTAG* 7.

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it cannot in fact be subsumed under the concept it claims to instantiate. But the soul of the observing subject remains serene and innocent in this act of annihilation, and this is because he or she cannot feel responsible for it. The annihilation, the "nothingness" of the reality in question, is experienced here as a simple matter of fact. It is for this reason that Zarathustra teaches his disciples, "Not by wrath does one kill, but by laughing" (*Z*:I "Reading and Writing").[17] With these words, Zarathustra means to convey the idea that it is surely not by means of invective suffused with anger that Christian morality is to be overcome, since this latter morality itself takes its origin from *ressentiment*. Rather, what serves most effectively to sweep Christian morality out of the way is the laughter of a soul that is serene and self-focused: a soul which simply observes the incongruence between the sublime and exalted notions of Christianity and their human, all too human realization.

1.5 The Strange Case of *Zarathustra IV*

The question of whether Nietzsche originally conceived of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a work consisting of four, or rather only of three parts, is one which remains controversial among scholars even today. Nietzsche wrote and published Parts I, II and III of *Zarathustra* separately and, after completing the third, declared to his friends that the book was "completely finished" (*KSB* 6: 480).[18] Indeed, even in *Ecce Homo*, looking back to the time of *Zarathustra*'s composition, Nietzsche confirms this version of the facts and claims to have completed the book with the writing of its third part.[19] However, already during the period of the writing of *Zarathustra*'s

[17] Here Nietzsche is referring to the laughter engendered by parody. In Nietzsche we find many kinds of laughter and not all of them are meant to "kill." I substantially agree with Mark Alfano that Nietzsche was "a pluralist about the functions of humor and laughter," in other words, that he displays "some affinity for each of the three major theories of humor": namely, the "contempt theory," the "relief theory" and the "incongruity theory" (Alfano 2019: 220ff.). In *GS* 1 we find a laughter of relief that arises as a spontaneous reaction after those illusions that weigh, in various ways, upon our actions have been swept away (see also Froese 2017: 83, 85). This type of laughter is evoked at many points in *Zarathustra*, the antithesis of "the spirit of gravity," the archenemy of the book's eponymous protagonist. An example of this type of laughter would be the laugh that bursts forth out of the young shepherd after he has bitten off the head of the black snake that has slithered into his mouth (see *Z*:III "On the Vision and the Riddle" 2). The laughter provoked by parody, as we have seen, arises instead from the perception of an incongruence between two conceptual frameworks. Finally, we also find in Nietzsche a laughter of contempt or, to be precise, self-contempt: the laughter of satire. On the different types of laughter in Nietzsche see also *BGE* 294; Weeks (2004: 13); and Wirth (2005: 130).

[18] See also *KSB* 6: 482, 485, 490, 492, 498.

[19] "The following winter [1883], under Nice's halcyon skies ... I discovered the third book of *Zarathustra*—and was finished" (*EH Z*:4).

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second and third parts we find among Nietzsche's papers plans for a continuation of or sequel consisting of yet another three parts, to which Nietzsche envisaged giving the collective title *Midday and Eternity* (*KSA* 10:13[22], see also *KSA* 11:25[323]).[20] Nietzsche completed only the first part of this projected new work, the most frequently mentioned potential title for which is *The Temptation of Zarathustra*. This was in the end privately printed by Nietzsche, at his own expense, as the fourth and last part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Indeed, Nietzsche had at the time broken off all relations with his publisher Schmeitzner who, he felt, was insufficiently committed to the promotion of his works (*KSB* 6: 556). When, in 1886, he returned to his old publisher Fritzsch, Nietzsche had him bind the still-extant copies of *Zarathustra I, II* and *III* together into a single volume bearing the title "*Thus Spoke Zarathustra. A Book for All and None. In Three Parts*," with no mention at all being made of any fourth part.[21] For this reason, many scholars hold the view that "*Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as it exists today is . . . a whole (parts I-III) plus a fragment (part IV) of a larger whole that does not exist" (Lampert 1986: 289). Other scholars, however, stressing the fact that Nietzsche described Part IV of *Zarathustra* to those few friends to whom he sent privately-published copies, as the "sublime *finale*" of his work (*KSB* 7: 572), argue rather that the plan for a new book entitled *Midday and Eternity* was most likely just a device with which he hoped to attract a new publisher (see *KSB* 7: 580; Loeb [2010: 89]; Pippin [1988: 67 n. 8]; Nehamas [2000: 180 n. 15]) and that, in fact, *The Temptation of Zarathustra* had all along been conceived as the fourth and concluding part of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

Paul Loeb (2000) has distinguished two schools or trends among Nietzsche scholars as regards this specific problem of the composition of *Zarathustra*. On the one hand, there are the "literalist" readers of the work who tend to marginalize Part IV as not belonging to Nietzsche's original plan for *Zarathustra* and who look on the text as effectively ending with the end of Part III. On the other hand, there are the "ironist" readers who hold Part IV to be not only an integral part of *Zarathustra* but indeed, as Nietzsche sometimes suggested, its "grand *finale*" in which there is first fully revealed that intention of the philosopher to examine and question his own project which had animated the whole work from the very start

[20] Nietzsche began to work in detail on the book project *Midday and Eternity* in the summer and autumn of that same year and also, in this same period, decided to give to its first part the title *The Temptation of Zarathustra* (*KSA* 11:31[30]).

[21] See *KSB* 7: 665, 733; and Schaberg (1995, 134f.).

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(see Loeb 2010: 85).[22] Higgins (1987), for example maintains that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* recounts the drama of a master who fails to find his audience. In Part IV, Higgins contends, Nietzsche is mocking Zarathustra, showing up the clumsy and ridiculous aspects of his own philosophical project. Nietzsche's intention in doing this, she argues, was that of extending the reflections contained in the work to also include a reflection on the necessary limitations of the message conveyed by it, indeed on the limitations of any philosophical affirmation made after the death of God. In short, Higgins sees Part IV of *Zarathustra* as a parody of Part I, II and III: one intended to strip away any claim of absolute validity from the philosophical assertions and contentions advanced in all these preceding parts of the work.

Pippin (1988) also reads the work as, in essence, a staging of the distance between Nietzsche and his own disguise, Zarathustra. According to Pippin, Nietzsche recounts here the drama of a master who finds it impossible to carry out the task he has set himself. This master utters pronouncements that advocate a highly specific ethical ideal: namely the *Uebermensch*. At the same time, however, he undermines the authority of these very pronouncements inasmuch as he also calls into question the possibility of "truth" in the traditional sense of this term (Pippin 1988: 56). Pippin argues that the work's Part IV conveys, notwithstanding its comic tone, a profoundly tragic lesson because Zarathustra, finding himself back in the same situation as he was in in the work's Prologue, finally comes to see that there is simply no way out of this paradox (Pippin 1988: 65).[23]

The objection that must be raised first and foremost against the position expounded by these "ironist readers" is that Nietzsche did not, either in

[22] According to Loeb (2010), the "ironist readers" include such scholars as Higgins 1987, 2010; Conway 1988, 1990, 1997; Magnus 1988; Pippin 1988; Shapiro 1989; Schacht 1991; Cauchi 1998; and Nehamas 2000. Neither "literal" nor "ironist" is Loeb's (2010) interpretation which views *Z* IV as indeed an integral part of the work but not as its "finale" from the narrative viewpoint. Gooding-Williams (2001: 44), on the other hand, maintains that *Z* IV is the work's finale – though for a different reason. As Gooding-Williams sees it, the parable "On the Three Metamorphoses" describes Zarathustra's own evolution throughout the course of the book's action – and it is only in Part IV that Zarathustra can be said to attain the envisaged "third metamorphosis" into a child.

[23] See also Shapiro (1989), who compares Part IV to a medieval carnival and sees Nietzsche's decision to transform the tragedy into a comedy as a renunciation of the text's claim to narrative authority. These "ironist" interpretations also look for support in the fact that, in the dramatic competitions held in Athens and elsewhere during the Classical Greek era it was usual for the dramatists to present a tetralogy, or three tragedies followed by a satyr play which, essentially, mocked or parodied the heroes and gods who had formed the *dramatis personae* of the respective preceding tragedies. See Hatab 1988, 71 and *KSA* 7:1[109].

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1885 or at any other time, actually publish Part IV of *Zarathustra*. Groddeck (1991), for example, makes a strong argument that Part IV is most properly categorized among the "posthumous writings" of Nietzsche. At best, it can be said to belong in that category lying between "published" and "posthumous": *Privatdruck*. I concur with this view to the extent that it is indeed the case that, although it did appear in printed form, it did so without any date on the cover and in a tiny print run of only forty-five copies, with only nine of these forty-five ever being distributed to readers (Schaberg 1995: 105).[24] Moreover, at the end of 1888, after having expressed the intention to request the return even of these very few copies that had been sent to his closest friends,[25] Nietzsche showed no hesitation about "cannibalizing" the text of Part IV and using it as working material for the *Dionysus Dithyrambs*.[26] As Groddeck rightly points out, this choice surely indicates a decision on Nietzsche's part not to let Part IV of *Zarathustra* count among his published philosophical statements (Groddeck 1991: XVII). In this light, it seems impossible to sustain the philological claim of the "ironist readers" that this Part IV was intended by Nietzsche as the "grand *finale*" to *Zarathustra* through which all that which had preceded it in this work alone acquired its true sense. Moreover, if Nietzsche had truly understood Part IV in this way, it seems incomprehensible that he should have persisted, to the very end of his active intellectual life, in allowing the circulation of a work in three parts. We would then have to assume that he was giving his reader the text in the form of a mutilated stump that would be impossible for the reader to understand.

Additionally, it seems to me that the drama that Nietzsche presents to us in this work is not Zarathustra's difficulty in finding disciples, but rather Zarathustra's own confrontation with the thought of "eternal recurrence."

[24] Nietzsche kept one copy for himself and the remaining thirty-five undistributed copies stayed in Köselitz's apartment in Venice until 1891 (Schaberg 1995: 105).

[25] On the basis of an analysis of the posthumous notes Groddeck proves that, in the autumn of 1888, Nietzsche still planned to publish Part IV of *Zarathustra* as an independent work with the title *The Temptation of Zarathustra* (Groddeck 1991: LH). It was perhaps for this reason that, at the end of this year, Nietzsche communicated to Koselitz his intention to recover all the undistributed printed copies of this fourth part – a text which, in fact, Nietzsche does, on this occasion, designate by the term "*ineditum*" (*KSB* 8: 1181).

[26] It is in January 1889 that Nietzsche authorizes publication of these *Dionysus Dithyrambs*, a work which included six poetic compositions written in 1888, entitled *The Songs of Zarathustra*, and three poetic compositions originally included in *Zarathustra* Part IV ("Only a Fool! Only a Poet!" "Among the Daughters of the Desert," and "Ariadne's Lament"). The first edition of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as a work in four parts, which is the form in which we read the book today, appeared in 1892 when Nietzsche had already become permanently mentally incapacitated.

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It is only in the work's Prologue that Zarathustra is shown failing to find an audience and this is so because, naively, Zarathustra chooses here to address the mass of the people. This mass, being composed of instances of what he himself later calls the contemptible "last man," cannot do otherwise than misunderstand and deride him.[27] But already in the course of Part I Zarathustra finds disciples who come to venerate him as a guide and teacher. Among their gifts to him is a staff, whereby they implicitly confer on him the role of shepherd to their "flock." The parody of the Gospels here is impossible to overlook. Zarathustra, however, refuses this role, explaining to them that he wants neither to be an object of veneration or faith, and least of all an object of imitation. He bids them "lose me and find yourselves," adding that "only when you have all denied me will I return to you" (*Z*:I "Bestowing Virtue" 3). And indeed Zarathustra does return among his disciples during the events narrated in Part II which transpire almost entirely in the "blessed isles."[28] Part III is of a more introspective character and Zarathustra engages more in solitary discourses with himself than in discourses addressed to others. This stage of introspection is required by the structure of the narrative: Zarathustra must come to terms with the thought of "eternal recurrence," which he has great difficulty accepting. These inward struggles, however, do not mean that he gives up his role as a spiritual master. Parodying the passage in the New Testament in which Christ exhorts his disciples to follow him, saying "I am the way, the truth and the life," Zarathustra says to his friends: "'This – it turns out – is *my* way – where is yours?' This is how I answered those who asked me 'the way.' *The* way, after all – it does not exist!" (*Z*:III "Spirit of Gravity" 2). As Pippin has rightly noted, Nietzsche is proposing here once again the model of the "true teacher" that he had already proposed in *Schopenhauer As Educator*. The true spiritual or intellectual master is not someone who transmits to his disciples any "one truth" of his own, but rather someone who exhorts these disciples, leading and teaching by example, to seek their own truths, and by accepting the necessary risk involved in pursuing this path (Pippin 2006: xviii n. 17). Likewise on the

[27] For a perfect portrait of the "last man," a human being "without passion or commitment", see Ansell-Pearson (1997: 105f.).

[28] The "blessed isles" are not, as is claimed by Santaniello (2018: 8), a reference to the years when Nietzsche was a regular guest at Wagner's villa in Tribschen and thus to the broken friendship with Wagner. As Paolo D'Iorio (2016: 79) has shown, "the blessed isles" is rather an evocation of that "cloister for free spirits" that Nietzsche tried to establish in Sorrento in 1876 together with a few close friends and that, initially, he even envisaged extending on a much larger scale, across all of Europe.

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plane of moral conduct, the true "master" does not wish to be imitated but rather emulated. What Zarathustra wishes for his disciples is that they learn, as he learned, to make themselves creators of their own values. In conclusion then, although Zarathustra is indeed portrayed by Nietzsche as a "master" of a highly unconventional type,[29] it is precisely in this guise that he succeeds in imparting those specific teachings that he aims to impart.

My view, then, is that any interpretation of Part IV needs to take into account Nietzsche's specific intentions in composing it, which do not coincide with those motivating the composition of the work's first three parts – even though the concerns of Part IV can be effectively integrated into the work's earlier parts. The intention behind Nietzsche's writing of Part IV becomes clear when we consider the title that Nietzsche most frequently assigns to it in his posthumous notes: *The Temptation of Zarathustra*. It is a declaration confirmed, moreover, by what Zarathustra himself reveals in the final chapter of Part IV entitled "The Sign." In this chapter, Zarathustra realizes that the soothsayer encountered at the beginning of Part IV had caused him to hear the cry of distress of the "higher men" so as to subject him to the temptation of compassion, which he finally overcomes. Once again, we are faced with the parody of a passage from the New Testament: specifically, that of Satan tempting Christ in the wilderness. In the version of the story told in the Synoptic Gospels, Jesus, after being baptized, fasted for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness. During this time Satan tempted him three times. The first temptation played on Jesus's hunger. Satan urged him to turn the stones around him to bread so he could eat. The second appealed to his pride and vanity. He should throw himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple so that angels would be sent to catch him and the whole world would see that he was the Son of God. The third temptation appealed to the lust for power. Satan promised Jesus "all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them" if he would only "fall down and worship him." The temptation that Zarathustra must overcome, instead, is that of compassion, the Christian

[29] Daniel Conway has argued that the refusal of the traditional model of the "master" occurs in Zarathustra's case only gradually, that is, in the course of the book's narrative. Zarathustra becomes progressively more aware that his own role as "master" stands in contradiction to the teaching that he wishes to impart and that, if he can truly teach at all, this can only be, at best, indirectly and by way of example (Conway 1990: 95). In my view, however, Zarathustra has acquired this (self-) awareness already as early as the end of the Prologue. On Zarathustra as a parody of the figures of the teacher and the lawgiver, see also Ansell-Pearson (1994: 102f.).

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virtue *par excellence* which, instead, in Zarathustra's own system of values is considered a weakness and a vice which not only degrades and damages him to whom it is shown but also – and above all – harms the person who feels and shows it by distracting him from his own personal task.[30] The objects of Zarathustra's compassion are, as I have indicated, the "higher men." Whereas that "crowd of the marketplace" to whom Zarathustra had tried to preach in the Prologue have learned nothing of the death of God and therefore live content with their petty happiness and petty virtues, these "higher men" are inwardly torn and profoundly dissatisfied individuals because they are all too conscious of the fact that the old values can no longer be sustained and neither can the ways of life that were premised upon these old values. For this reason, these "higher men" find themselves unable to adapt to life in the modern world; indeed, they are disgusted by it. Nietzsche describes them as "the people of great longing, of great nausea, of great surfeit" (*Z*:IV "Welcome"). They suffer deeply and have turned to Zarathustra to seek help. Zarathustra does not deny them his ear, or the shelter of his cavern, since already their dissatisfaction with the modern way of life, with the progressive "diminishment" (*Verkleinerung*) of the modern human being, and even with those traits they find in themselves that betray their sharing in this modern decadence, all indicate that these men stand far above the "crowd of the marketplace." Zarathustra therefore says to them: "And truly I love you for not knowing how to live today, you higher men! For thus *you* live – best!" (*Z*:IV "Higher Man" 3). In the end, however, Zarathustra understands that the "higher men" are too weak and exhausted by their own disgust to be appropriate material for the creation of the overman and, after these "higher men" have all fled before the roaring of his lion, he remains alone in his cave to await the expected advent of his "children."[31]

Campioni (2018: 135) has shown that in a note from 1884, Nietzsche makes use of the French expression *homme supérieur* to refer to "those who oppose the growing stultification and vulgarization of Europe" (*KSA* 11:25 [71]). This expression was in fact highly characteristic of the cultural

[30] See Zavatta (2019: 117ff.)

[31] I concur with Gooding-Williams, who sees in this expression an allusion to those "philosophers of the future" or "new philosophers" whom Nietzsche evokes also in *Beyond Good and Evil*. Their task will be to create new values in the manner of the child, in other words, "in playing" (Gooding-Williams 2001: 27). Nevertheless, this fact does not appear to me to show, as Gooding-Williams claims it does, that *Z* IV forms the *finale* of the work. I would argue rather that this text from 1885 anticipates certain themes that were to be fully developed only in *Beyond Good and Evil* (1886).

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climate in France in Nietzsche's era. The phrase was also used by Paul Bourget in his *Essais de psychologie contemporaine* (1883) and *Nouveaux essais de psychologie contemporaine* (1885), in which he diagnosed the *décadence* of contemporary culture by examining the psychology of a series of highly representative contemporary figures.[32] In Baudelaire, Renan, Flaubert, Taine, and Stendhal, Bourget saw merely different expressions of the same life-denying spirit: "What germs of death must float invisibly in the air of our civilization if these very best amongst us . . . display this phenomenon of an appetite for nothingness equal to that of adherents to even the most sombre of Far Eastern doctrines?" Bourget asks in the *Essais* (1920: 189).[33] In *The Temptation of Zarathustra* Nietzsche raises more or less the same question and, in forms personified by the various "higher men," analyses the various expressions of modern *décadence*, such as exoticism, the cult of the primitive and the innocent, the religion of compassion and suffering, Tolstoyism and Wagnerism (Campioni 2000: 337). In certain of the "higher men" it is possible to recognize the traits of culturally eminent individuals of Nietzsche's era, such as, for example Schopenhauer, Wagner, and Tolstoy.[34] These historical figures are "typified" by Nietzsche, that is to say, represented rather under the forms of "ideal types." Although these "ideal types," in other words, manifest in exemplary fashion certain key characteristics displayed by the real historical personalities that inspired them, they do not aspire to be faithful and accurate portraits of these historical personalities. In fact, Nietzsche's intention is not to strike critical blows at individual people but rather to

[32] Nietzsche read Bourget's *Essays* for the first time in winter 1883. See Campioni (2001: 73). The book *Nouveaux Essais*, which is preserved in his personal library, features many underlinings and comments added in the margins. See Campioni, D'Iorio, Fornari, Fronterotta, Orsucci (2003: 149f.).

[33] It is above all in Renan that Bourget sees the perfect representative of the *homme supérieur*, inasmuch as Renan stood out in his struggle against the mediocrity of modern life and the general degradation caused by democracy. "To use a phrase expressive in its simplicity, he is a 'superior man'," writes Bourget; "One might almost, indeed, say that he is the Superior Man" (Bourget 1920: 85).

[34] In "Soothsayer," the proclaimer of the "great weariness," the great majority of commentators have seen a personification of Schopenhauerian pessimism (Cartwright 1993: 52; Cauchi 1998: 77), while in "the Magician" there is clearly recognizable a portrait of Wagner (indeed, in *The Case of Wagner* and elsewhere, Nietzsche does often refer to Wagner as "the old magician"). It is certainly fascinating to consider the hypotheses advanced by Santaniello (2018) to the effect that the "last Pope" bears certain of the characteristics of Franz Liszt (Santaniello 2018: 40) and that "the Conscientious of Spirit" may be a reference to Erwin Rohde (Santaniello 2018: 27). These latter hypotheses are in fact developments of intuitions of Nietzsche's great biographer Janz (1981: 376).

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denounce certain general tendencies of his age. In other "higher men" it is possible to identify attitudes of mind that had been adopted and then transcended by Nietzsche himself, such as historicism, punctilious scientific probity, and a certain metaphysical tension.[35] Nietzsche's intention is not biographical: even where he directs his gaze to his own life, he is aiming thereby to identify certain tendencies in the decadent culture of modernity. In *Ecce Homo* he describes himself as "a decadent [but] . . . the opposite as well" (*EH* "Wise" 2) precisely because he too had experienced in his own person such temptations but, instead of yielding to them, had succeeded in the end in overcoming them.

In light, then, of the intentions behind this work – intentions which are made clear enough already by Nietzsche himself, but are now made even clearer by the comparison with Bourget's work which we have sketched out above – we must conclude that, despite its featuring numerous situations which parody those described in the Christian Gospels, the *ethos* that characterizes *The Temptation of Zarathustra* is no longer that of parody but rather that of satire.[36] Satire and parody are – particularly since *Zarathustra* is composed with a comic and therefore critical intent – two genres which are often confused with one another. Above all, however, they tend actually to pass over into one another: there are satires that make use of parody as a textual strategy and, vice versa, parodies into which satirical elements are woven. The terms through which the two genres can be most clearly distinguished from one another are the following: whereas parody consists in the re-elaboration – often in comical vein and with

[35] For example, in "the Conscientious of Spirit" there can be recognized that painstaking philological exactitude, myopic and impersonal, which found embodiment not only in Nietzsche's close friend Rohde but also, during his many years as a brilliant professional philologist, in Nietzsche himself. See also Froese (2017: 73f.). "The Shadow" is clearly the nihilistic counterpart to the "Free Spirit." It is a figure that had already appeared in the earlier work *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. See Zavatta (2019: 99).

[36] Several interpreters (Oppel 2005, Higgins 2010, Babich 2013, 2014) believe that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* was written on the semi-serious model of the Menippean satire, a genre that Nietzsche knew well since his university years in Leipzig. Indeed, in November 1868 Nietzsche gave a lecture in front of the Philological Association on *The Cynic Menippus and the Satires of Varro*. In this lecture Nietzsche alluded specifically to the "serio-comic" genre invented by Menippus, the so-called *spoudogeloion* (*KSB* 2: 599. See also *KSB* 2: 604 and 612). Nietzsche, however, maintained an interest in the genre of satire his entire life, as is demonstrated, for example, by an appreciation of the Venetian Pietro Buratti, an outstanding exponent of Italian satire, which we find in Nietzsche's notes in 1885, immediately after the completion of Part IV (*KSA* 11:34[8]); or his praise of Voltaire's satire on the immortality of the soul (*KSA* 13:11[201]); or, finally, his celebration of the *Satyricon* of Petronius for its having freed sexual desire from the shadow of sin (*KSA* 11:15[103]).

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critical intent – of a text, satire consists in the holding up to ridicule, in this case with an even more marked and prominent critical intent, of a real situation in its various social, cultural, moral and political aspects (Ben-Porat 1979: 247).[37]

As Higgins has correctly observed, whereas the first three parts of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* are characterized by a serious, prophetic tone – even if Zarathustra does, even in these parts, laugh from time to time, or preach the virtues of laughter – the work's fourth part recounts a story "that is not only funny but often raucous" (2010: 131). According to Higgins, and the other "ironist readers," this is due to the fact that in the fourth part of *Zarathustra* Nietzsche sets about making fun of his protagonist and of the serious and prophetic discourses he had delivered in the first three parts. In my view, however, a more convincing explanation is that in the first three parts of *Zarathustra* it was Nietzsche's intention to parody the Bible – or, to speak more precisely, the Gospels of the New Testament – with the aim of sweeping away the moral vision of existence that these texts convey. In order to achieve this aim, Zarathustra is indeed obliged to mimic that seriousness from which he intends to liberate himself. The fundamental intention behind *The Temptation of Zarathustra*, instead, is that of critiquing, by means of satire, the various aspects of a decadent modernity.[38] The mechanism employed by satire in order to provoke laughter is completely

[37] Nietzsche explicitly recognizes satire's function of social, cultural, and political critique when he criticizes Cervantes for having railed, with his *Don Quixote*, rather against the educated Spanish public's taste for stories of knightly adventure than against the real evil of his day, namely the Inquisition. This leads Nietzsche to judge Cervantes to be an expression of "the decadence of Spanish culture" in the sixteenth century, and even to call him a "national disaster [*nationales Unglück*]" (*KSA* 8:23[140]). Social, cultural, and political critique was also the aim behind the satires of Mark Twain, whose work Nietzsche knew well and liked very much. During the *Human, All Too Human* period Nietzsche took up certain of the American's pungent observations about the way of life and mentality of his own country and used them to focus on certain tendencies in Europe which were, he felt, taking a dangerous turn in the same direction (see Zavatta 2021).

[38] Loeb claims that, when Nietzsche added Part IV to the first three parts, he understood it as a sort of extended flashback which in fact fits into the narrative at a point prior to the end of Part Three (to be more precise, between the beginning of the chapter "On Old and New Tablets" and the beginning of the chapter "Convalescent") (Loeb 2010: 99). Part IV, according to Loeb, "supplements, clarifies, and expands the details of one final and essential advance on the way to the complete fulfillment at the end of Part III: namely, Zarathustra's overcoming of his final test and obstacle, the temptation to pity or commiserate with the higher human" (Loeb 2010: 95). This hypothesis is compatible with my analysis of the content of the work. In order to affirm "eternal recurrence" Zarathustra must in fact overcome not only the *ressentiment* felt by "the meanest men" but also the nausea felt by "the greatest," these latter – and their nausea – being the protagonists of Part IV.

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different from that employed by parody, and the comic effect is much more marked with respect to that produced by parody. Laughter here does not arise, as it does in the case of parody, from the discrepancy between an exalted concept and its human, all too human realization but rather from the sense of the ridiculous engendered by attitudes accentuated *ad absurdum*. Satire, therefore, makes use of exaggeration, paradox, and other rhetorical tools in order to render ridiculous and grotesque those mores, practices, and personalities that it sets out to critique. This is just the operation performed by Nietzsche with his invention of the "higher men," who display in an especially emphatic way the decadent tendencies present in modernity. Consequently, the comic effect in Part IV is much more marked than in the three preceding parts.

At this point we may ask ourselves how it could possibly have come about that Nietzsche chose to use the mode of satire to carry out a similar analysis of modern *décadence* to that which his French contemporary Bourget had carried out, in his *Essais*, in a tone and style of analytic seriousness. The laughter produced by the satire in Part IV is undeniably a laughter of contempt. It is, however, neither a laughter of the kind condemned by Hobbes as a sign of arrogance and vanity,[39] nor a laughter like that with which the crowd assembled in the market square responds to Zarathustra at the beginning of Part I.[40] The contempt here, in fact, is a contempt directed not so much toward something or someone external to those who are laughing. Instead, it is a contempt directed at ourselves, the laughers, to the extent that we too participate in the decadent tendencies of modernity.[41] The laughter provoked by satire, in other words, is a laughter at oneself born of self-contempt which, in turn, is aimed at setting in motion a process of self-overcoming.[42] Mark Alfano (2019: 223, 228) claims that, for Nietzsche, the sense of humour is a virtue essentially allied with the "pathos of distance." Without entering here into an analysis of the sense of humour in general, it is certainly possible to agree that there exists a certain affinity at least between the capacity to laugh at oneself – and thus to feel a certain contempt vis-à-vis one's own self – and this "pathos" which Nietzsche repeatedly evokes. Indeed, the "pathos of distance" consists in the feeling not only of a distance between ourselves and others

[39] See Gilman (2001: 5f.). [40] See Lippit (1992: 40). [41] See Froese (2017: 74).
[42] This is the reason why in Part IV Zarathustra insists so strongly, in the teaching he imparts to the "higher men," on laughing at oneself (*Z*:IV "Last Supper").

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but also, and above all, in that of a distance between ourselves and that "higher self" that we strive to attain (the awareness of this latter distance giving rise to self-contempt). The "pathos of distance," in other words, arises not from arrogance, but rather from our awareness of our own distinctive individuality and of the task incumbent upon us of developing this individuality.[43] Viewed from this perspective, this "pathos" can with good reason be looked on as the opposite counterpart, but also as the antidote, to the great temptation against which Zarathustra struggles in Part IV: namely, pity.

In the last analysis, then, we may say that, through that technique of satire which he employed in Part IV, Nietzsche was not aiming simply at describing, or even at simply critiquing, decadent modernity, but rather at setting in motion – and reviving, in the highest and best of its representatives, the "pathos of distance" and its attendant self-contempt – a genuinely active process of overcoming the decadence of modernity.

1.6 Conclusion

Today there is a greater awareness that the philosophical tradition comprises within itself works that are very different from one another as regards both genre and style of composition. Indeed, a very large number of important philosophical works in the history of thought have been written in literary, sometimes even in outright poetic, form. To name just a few: Parmenides' *On Nature*; the dialogues of Plato; Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura* or, in the modern era, Pope's *Essay on Man*; Voltaire's *Candide*; right up to such recent works as Sartre's *Nausea*. For such works Gooding-Williams has coined the term "philosophical narratives" (2001:13), meaning that here philosophical questions are addressed by such inventive means as narrations, dialogues, personalities and events, as opposed to philosophical essays and treatises of the more conventional type. If, then, there persists, even today, a degree of stubborn resistance to viewing *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* as part of the philosophical tradition, this may no longer be due, as it surely once was, solely or largely to the predominance of the strictly argumentational standards set up by the "analytic revolution" in

[43] On the influence that Ralph Waldo Emerson exerted on Nietzsche in this regard, see Zavatta (2019: 183) and Conant (2001: 220).

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twentieth-century philosophy (Luchte 2008: 2). The fact is that, above and beyond its non-conformity with the argumentational norms of the conventional philosophical "treatise," *Zarathustra* also challenges the habits and expectations of today's readers in yet one further way. *Zarathustra* (considered as a book in three parts) belongs to the narrative genre of the parody, that is, to a genre which has, traditionally, functioned as a form of communication among a certain "elite." What this means is that, in order for a parody to function at all, its reader must be sufficiently cultured to recognize and decipher the way that the author is mimicking the stylistic features of an existing text and filling them with new meaning. If this does not occur, then the reader will not grasp the parody and will interpret the text before him in directly literal terms, entirely misunderstanding the intention behind it. By writing *Zarathustra* as a parody, then, Nietzsche intended it as just that which he states it to be in its subtitle: "a book for all and none." That is to say, as a work that may be usefully read by everyone but that will, because it is so dense in its hidden references and allusions, be fully understood, perhaps, by no one at all.[44]

Up until the 1970s, literary critics tended to pay little attention to parody, considering it to be a minor artistic form of no especial relevance for an appreciation of the broader history of literature (Rose 1993: 1). But with the rise of "post-modern" styles of criticism and analysis, the situation has changed radically, and parody has come to be appreciated as the intertextual, self-reflexive literary form *par excellence*, that is to say, as the main way in which an author can develop dialogues with the great works of the past, or critically reflect upon the past or present canons of a specific art form. The principal theories of parody emerging in recent years (Rose 1979, 1993; Genette 1982; Hutcheon 1985, 2000; Dentith 2000) insist very strongly that this notion of parody as just the debasement and ridiculing of an existing work is typical only of a certain historical period and cannot be generalized to the whole history of the form.[45] Today, parody tends to be defined in much broader terms, namely as a dialogue

[44] Pippin observes that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is a work that is "basically inaccessible" while being at the same time "obviously accessible" (Pippin 1988: 46). In other words, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* can be read on several different levels and a genuinely exhaustive understanding of this work is something that Nietzsche conceived only as an unrealizable "regulative ideal."

[45] Dentith emphasizes that, although Aristotle, in his *Poetics*, deals with parody in its specifically comic sense, the term "parody" was used, in Greek and Latin culture, in a much more general way, namely, to refer to a "practice of quotation, not necessarily humorous, in which both writers and speakers introduce allusions to previous texts" (2000: 10). Dentith himself, therefore, defines parody in a very broad sense as "any cultural practice which provides a relatively polemical

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between texts belonging to different epochs and different traditions, in which interpretation stresses out the differences between these texts. Hutcheon, very interestingly, describes parody as an operation of "re-coding" which establishes "difference at the heart of similarity" (Hutcheon 2000: 8). Parody's way of repeating the past while at the same time introducing a moment of difference into the repetition becomes a means of freeing oneself from that past and affirming and embracing the new; parody functions, in short, as "a mode of emancipation" (Hutcheon [2000:10, 35]; see also Erlich [1965: 93, 194]).[46]

Nietzsche, then, by refusing the narrow conception of parody that was still dominant in his era, proves himself to have been also in this regard a decidedly "untimely" thinker: one who reached back to the past in order to anticipate the future. In the case of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, the "re-coding" that Hutcheon speaks of can, with good reason, be called a "transvaluation": the vocabulary of the tradition is emptied of its old significance and filled with a new one. Egoism becomes a virtue and compassion a sin, heroism a vice and scepticism a value,[47] the obliging friend the worst of enemies and the brave enemy a benefactor.[48] In other words, Nietzsche enters into the principal text of the Christian tradition and empties it of its significance from within, filling all its stylistic features with a new meaning. Through the textual strategies that he adopts in order

allusive imitation of another cultural production or practice" (2000: 9), the term "polemical" here alluding to the "evaluative aspect of parody." In support of this much broader notion of parody, we might note that Hutcheon too emphasizes that Euripides was considered, in his own era, to have been "parodying" Aeschylus and Sophocles when, in his *Medea*, he replaced the male protagonist traditional in Greek tragedies not just with a female but with one not belonging to any eminent Greek family. The intention behind such a gesture, not to elicit laughter but rather to call into question a whole tradition (Hutcheon 2000: 6). Rose (1993: 9), confirms that parody only began to acquire its more restricted modern meaning of "a mimicking intended to ridicule" from about the middle of the sixteenth century onward.

[46] On the topic of "repetition" (which contains in itself an element of difference) as a form of affirmation of individuality countervalent to the logic of generality, see Deleuze (1994). Deleuze cites as his references Kirkegaard and Nietzsche, who made of repetition "the fundamental category of a philosophy of the future" (5). Moreover, these writers did not engage with the theme of repetition from a merely theoretical point of view but actually put repetition into practice, conveying it through their style (Deleuze 1994: 5).

[47] On Nietzsche's criticism of heroism as an ally of the ascetic ideal, see *Z*:II "Sublime Ones," and Campioni (2008: 66–69). See also *D* 215 and *KSB* 6: 342.

[48] The great number of neologisms that Nietzsche includes in *Zarathustra* is surely due precisely to his intent to parody Christianity using all its favorite expressions. For example, the expressions "flight from one's neighbour [*Nächsten-Flucht*]" and "love of the farthest [*Fernsten-Liebe*]" are coined by Nietzsche by way of parody, and thereby of assault, on the Christian value of "loving thy neighbour [*Nächstenliebe*]" (*Z*:I "Neighbor" 44). See Zittel (2011: 140ff.) and Weichelt (1910: 236f.).

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to structure *Zarathustra* as a parody of the New Testament, Nietzsche takes his place as a key precursor of a literary and artistic practice which, a century and a half later, come to play fundamental and vital role in the cultural and intellectual life of our own present age.[49] He is, then, a total innovator when it comes to the practice of philosophy.[50]

[49] Gadamer (1986) describes *Zarathustra* as "a long series of variegated parodies" and correctly identifies this textual strategy as "a discourse which takes up linguistic formulations that lie already to hand but re-forms them, often developing them in unaccustomed directions, and often distorting them in a mocking way" (3). Nonetheless, Gadamer considers the style of *Zarathustra* to be excessively rhetorical and overloaded with pathos. In other words, he states that such a style belongs irretrievably to the past and finds no resonance among Germans of his generation (6, 8). Gadamer seems not fully to grasp the specific intentions that Nietzsche was pursuing in *Zarathustra* through the use of parody; or at least, he seems to call these intentions into question. Indeed, in Gadamer's judgment, Nietzsche's choice of imitating the style of a past epoch seems to be an unnecessary and an unfortunate one.

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CHAPTER 2

Philosophy As a Way of Life in Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Keith Ansell-Pearson and Marta Faustino

> Life is a succession of lessons which must be lived to be understood.
> All is riddle, and the key to a riddle is another riddle.
>
> Emerson

From the beginning of his career Nietzsche is engaged in a search for philosophy, and he asks a number of fundamental questions: What is philosophy? What type is the philosopher? What is philosophy's relation to culture and to a people? Just what can the philosopher as a solitary, even aloof, figure offer to others? Nietzsche is especially concerned with the fate of philosophy under conditions of modernity. If we take cognizance of his Basel lectures on the future of educational institutions, for example, it becomes clear that Nietzsche is attempting to save philosophy from the threats posed to it by modern educational developments in which philosophy is becoming increasingly professionalized and, in Nietzsche's words, "policed," being "limited by governments, churches, academies, customs, and human cowardice to scholarly pretence" (*HL* 5). Does philosophy have any rights, he asks, if it is little more than "inwardly restrained knowledge without effect?" (*HL* 5) Even though modern universities have reduced philosophy to an empty "critique of words by means of other words," Nietzsche believes that the touchstone of true philosophy is "whether one can live in accordance with it" (*SE* 8).

Much of what Nietzsche says in his writings about the modern condition of philosophy is in accord with the more recent insights developed by Pierre Hadot (1922–2010). Hadot has lamented the decline of philosophy from being a total way of life, as it was for the ancients, to becoming a purely theoretical discipline, an academic specialism with its own technical jargon, circulating only among scholars in the university, without any fundamental relation to the life and character of those who practice it. Against current academic practice, Hadot argues that at its origins, and for a good part of its history, philosophy was not a mere body of theoretical

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and abstract knowledge, but an eminently practical activity with a strong existential orientation, the aim of which was the transformation of the individual in order to reach the good or flourishing life. In his famous formulations, philosophy was an "art of living" or a "way of life," that is "a mode of existing-in-the-world . . . the goal of which was to transform the whole of the individual's life" (Hadot 1995: 265). For real wisdom, Hadot writes, does not merely cause us to know: it makes us *be* in a different way (Hadot 1995: 265).

Even though Hadot's focus is mainly on ancient philosophy, he cites Nietzsche, among other figures such as Schopenhauer, as an example of a modern thinker who was influenced by the model of ancient philosophy and reacted against the university (Hadot 2002: 261). According to Hadot, Nietzsche conceived of philosophy "not only as a concrete, practical activity, but also as a transformation of our way of inhabiting and perceiving the world" (Hadot 2002: 270). At present we are witnessing a resurgence of interest in this idea of philosophy as a way of life. John Sellars has recently characterized it as a "metaphilosophical option that . . . can still be taken up today" (Sellars 2017: 41) and Michael Chase has argued that this conception might offer a "third way" of doing philosophy that is neither analytical nor continental (Chase 2013: 280). Bringing Nietzsche into dialogue with Hadot, who is largely responsible for introducing the idea of philosophy as a way of life into contemporary intellectual discourse, offers a fruitful avenue of research: while Hadot's considerations on philosophy as a way of life shed light on Nietzsche's novel philosophical practice, Nietzsche might offer an important contribution for current debates inspired by Hadot on what philosophy is – and even should be.

In this contribution, and inspired by Hadot's suggestions, we endeavour to illuminate how this practice of philosophy is at work in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Although Nietzsche's thinking undergoes significant developments after his early writings, we wish to show that *Zarathustra* is an especially fertile text to look at in the light of philosophy as a way of life. In this highly distinctive text in his *corpus* not only do we see Zarathustra intensifying Nietzsche's criticism of "scholars" and putting forward his own conceptions of knowledge and wisdom as a transformative practice, we witness Zarathustra embracing and embodying this practice of philosophy, undergoing a process of self-transformation and promoting the transformation and indeed conversion of his readers to a new way of life. We will start by tracking the evolution of Nietzsche's conception of philosophy in the texts preceding *Zarathustra*. We will show how Nietzsche's ideal of philosophy as a practice that entails a particular mode

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of life in his earlier texts becomes more complex with the advent of his middle writings and his commitment to "the passion of knowledge," until it assumes a dramatic form in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Section 2.2 will deal with Nietzsche's critique of "scholars," "wise men" and academic philosophy in *Zarathustra*. We will discuss Zarathustra's key discourses on the topic, showing their connection with the middle writings, which we hold are particularly relevant to a comprehension of *Zarathustra*'s fundamental philosophical notions and imagery. The final section (2.3) is focused on the practice of philosophy as a way of life in the text. In particular, we show how Hadot's notions of incorporation of truth and of self-transformation and conversion are at work in *Zarathustra*. We conclude by outlining some considerations on the pertinence of reading *Zarathustra* in the light of philosophy as a way of life.

2.1 Nietzsche and Philosophy As a Way of Life

When we think of philosophy as a way of life, we think essentially of a conception of philosophy that privileges practice over theory, and even life over truth. Inspired by the Stoics, Hadot makes a distinction between "*discourse about* philosophy" and "*philosophy itself*": whereas the former is empty and vain if not incorporated and translated into practice, real philosophy corresponds to a practice and a particular mode of living (Hadot 1995: 267). Hadot further stresses that the goals of this conception of philosophy are often therapeutic since the philosophical life that is aimed at is deeply connected with an ideal of human flourishing, perfection, or completeness. This is particularly evident in antiquity, especially in the Hellenistic schools such as the Epicureans and the Stoics who explicitly presented philosophy as a practice intended to bring peace of mind and cure mankind's suffering and anguish. In recent reinventions of the model the matter becomes more complex and a therapeutic effect must not be assumed – as John Sellars points out, and as evident in Nietzsche himself, "it may turn out that philosophy is no consolation at all" (Sellars 2017: 48; see *D* 424).

Nevertheless, Hadot's characterization of philosophy as a way of life has led to some concerns that we would like to address before analysing Nietzsche's commitment to it as a model of philosophical practice. Indeed, an important question raised in recent negotiations with the topic is whether the goals of this conception of philosophy are compatible with the goals of genuine philosophical inquiry, notably the goal of securing truth or "truths" about ourselves and about the world. As Tom Stern has

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noted, if it is to be serious, philosophy must commit itself to the concern of finding the truth and this concern has to trump any attempt to make us as human agents in the world simply feel better (Stern 2015). This concern has been echoed by John Sellars who has recently argued that although "really good philosophy" worthy of the name needs to take seriously the idea of philosophy as way of life, this cannot be at the expense of the desire to understand the world as it is, and this means that philosophy cannot be construed simply as a project aimed at making us feel good because "truths can sometimes be uncomfortable" (Sellars 2017: 49).

An appreciation of Nietzsche as a figure who practices philosophy as a way of life needs to take these concerns seriously, and in this chapter we shall show how a concern with truth and knowledge and a concern with self-transformation are linked together in *Zarathustra*. It must be noted, however, that the aforementioned concern stems mainly from a misunderstanding of Hadot and of the schools of thought that inspired him in his conception of philosophy as a way of life. An easy route to attaining mental serenity is offered neither by the Epicurean school nor the Stoic school of philosophy. In both schools the aim is not to make human beings "feel better" in any simple-minded or straightforward manner. In the case of Epicureanism, difficult and uncomfortable truths have to be faced and incorporated; in the case of Stoics to practice virtue as a way of life is a constant task, involving a great deal of self-discipline and mental focus. It is often said that in Epicurean doctrine physics is subordinated to ethics and to the detriment of our knowledge of the world: we learn as much as is necessary to live a blessed life here and now. But this is a distortion of their actual practice of teaching. Tim O'Keefe is helpful here:

> [T]he Epicurean arguments in physics are supposed to establish that their conclusions are true, not merely that believing them helps us feel good. The pragmatic justification comes in, instead, to answer the question of why we should bother to engage in the activity of trying to understand the workings of the world in the first place. (O'Keefe 2010: 135)

With respect to Stoic teaching, so severe are the demands placed on human beings seeking to practice the life of virtue that a number of thinkers have seriously doubted whether such a life is actually attainable by human agents, let alone even desirable. Emerson, to take one example, writes: "There is no permanent wise man except in the figment of the Stoics" (Emerson 2000: 175–176). Similarly, Malebranche notes that such is the Stoic person's passion for glory that he strives for an impossible ideal of invulnerability (Malebranche 1997: 343). Nietzsche himself raises a

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deep-seated suspicion about the Stoic practice of philosophy, and from a decidedly modern psychological perspective, when he quizzes the pursuit of virtue that we find emphasized in the writings of figures such as Seneca and Epictetus (*GS* 122). In fact, even Hadot acknowledges the difficulty of the task involved in these philosophies when he writes that "both the grandeur and the paradox of ancient philosophy are that it was, at one and the same time, conscious of the fact that wisdom is inaccessible, and convinced of the necessity of pursuing spiritual progress" (Hadot 1995: 265). It would, therefore, be mistaken to construe these philosophies as presenting easy routes to attain mental serenity, or as downplaying the role of truth in the philosophical life. The fact that they privilege practice over theory does not imply that theory or truth are undervalued. On the contrary: according to this model of philosophical practice, truth is so important that it must not only be learned but incorporated and actually *lived* through. If its aims are therapeutic, this is because truth is conceived as something that transforms, heals, and redeems. But to have this effect it must be truth we are incorporating and not some kind of fiction designed to make us feel better. Any worthwhile conception of philosophy as a way of life, then, not only must not undervalue philosophy's commitment to truth, but it must translate it into a way of life.

Let us now examine in a more focused manner how these issues bear on an appreciation of Nietzsche, taking into account that he has an intellectual development, and a complex one at that. We begin by noting that Nietzsche has an interest from the beginning in philosophy as entailing a particular mode of life, and he makes this clear in his untimely meditations on history and on Schopenhauer. One of the earliest references to Epicureanism, for example, is an incidental remark in *Schopenhauer as Educator* where Nietzsche says that to write today in favor of an education that sets goals beyond money and acquisition, that takes a great deal of time, and that also encourages solitude, is likely to be disparaged as "refined egoism" and "immoral cultural Epicureanism" (*SE* 6).[1] In the meditation on history he laments the fact that today we have only "weak personalities" and adds that "[n]o one dares to fulfil the law of philosophy in himself, no one lives philosophically, with that simple, manly loyalty that compelled an ancient, if he had once declared loyalty to the Stoa, to act as Stoic wherever he was and whatever he did" (*HL* 5). In contrast to

[1] The following translations are used in this chapter: *A* (2005); *AOM* (2013); *BGE* (1998); *D* (2011); *EH* (2007); *GM* (2017); *GS* (1974); *HH* (1995, 2013); *HL* (1995); *PT* (1979); *SE* (1995); *TI* (2005); *WP* (1968); *WS* (2013); *Z* (1969).

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the impoverished and constrained version of philosophy that Nietzsche saw operating in his own time, he models his own ideal of philosophical practice on the Greek schools of thought: "I profit from a philosopher only insofar as he can be an example.... But this example must be supplied by his outward life and not merely in his books—in the way, that is, in which the philosophers of Greece taught, through their bearing, what they wore and ate, and their morals, rather than by what they said, let alone by what they wrote" (*SE* 3).

With the advent of the middle writings upon the publication of *Human, all too Human* in 1878, matters become much more complex when it comes to construing Nietzsche as a thinker dedicated to the practice of philosophy as a way of life. In these writings, we may note, he has a commitment to the methods and procedures of scientific truth and sceptical inquiry (*HH* 634–635), a dedication to the passion of knowledge (*D* 427, 429; *GS* 3, 123, 249, 283, 319, 328, 351), and a concern with how human beings can make instinctive, and endure, the incorporation of truth and knowledge (*GS* 11, 110). Commencing with *Human, all too Human* Nietzsche conceives philosophy as a practice of a sober mind that cools down human beings who are prone to neurosis. Philosophy, in concert with science, has the task of tempering emotional and mental excess. Indeed, Nietzsche defines the philosopher as a human being who speaks "from a cool, invigorating resting place" (*WS* 171). Nietzsche maintains that by fixing on the question of what knowledge can do for the happiness or well-being of human beings, ancient philosophy has served only to retard the advance of scientific inquiry (see *HH* 7). However, by the time of the second installment of *Human, all too Human* Nietzsche appears to no longer attach himself to an ideal of pure knowledge, and he is now keen to relate the story of a natural history of humankind in a way that aids the tasks of human emancipation. For example, in *Mixed Opinions and Maxims* he writes:

> Natural history, as the history of the wars and victories of moral spiritual force in opposition to fear, imagination, indolence, superstition, folly, should be narrated in such a way that everyone who hears it would be irresistibly impelled to strive for spiritual physical health and maturity, to feel gladness at being the heir and continuer of humanity, to sense his need for ever nobler undertakings. (*AOM* 184)

This citation is a significant one since it brings into relief in a highly instructive manner Nietzsche's two main enlightenment concerns: a commitment to naturalism that is to be pursued through the study of natural history, and a concern with an emancipatory philosophical program. It is

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interesting to reflect on the fact that Nietzsche conceives natural history "as the history of the wars and victories of moral-spiritual force," and he is clearly stating his Enlightenment-minded agenda when he refers to the need to combat "fear, imagination, indolence, superstition, and folly."

So, although aspects of Nietzsche's commitment to science continue in the subsequent volumes of *Human, all too Human*, there is a fundamental reorientation with him now positively reappraising Socrates and antique philosophers such as Epicurus and Epictetus (*WS* 86). It can be noted, for example, that although Epicurus is first and foremost an ethical teacher, he also embodies Nietzsche's ideal of the philosopher, and this is even acknowledged in *Human, all too Human* where he is said to be sober and rational, with his teaching serving to make us "colder and more sceptical" (*HH* 244). With respect to figures such as Epicurus and Epictetus, these are to be regarded thinkers in whom wisdom assumes bodily form (*AOM* 224). Admittedly, in his late writings Nietzsche comes to have a decidedly more complex appreciation of key Hellenistic figures. In these writings, Nietzsche has the legitimate worry that Epicurus' garden teaching of philosophy as a way of life results in lassitude, revealing an uncanny and troubling attachment to a "hypnotic feeling of nothingness" (*GM* III: 17; see also the description of him as a "typical decadent" in *A* 30). Nevertheless, even in the late writings Nietzsche continues to express an important, and overlooked, identification with the Epicurean "bent for knowledge," and to the extent that he is content to "look like an Epicurean" (*GS* 375; for further insight see Wotling 2020). It is clear, then, that Nietzsche's conception of 'flourishing' possesses unique features, bound up as it ultimately is with a commitment to Dionysian joy (over mere Epicurean delight), with self-overcoming, and even the surpassing of the human (see *KSA* 11:25[95], *WP* 1029; *Z*:I "Prologue").

As his projects unfold in the middle writings, Nietzsche is in search of a blending together of knowledge and wisdom (*AOM* 180), as well as a philosophy of spiritual health (*AOM* 356). He holds up Epictetus as a teacher of wisdom in whom wisdom "is the whispering of the solitary with himself in the crowded marketplace" (*AOM* 386). It is with the aid of the teachings of the antique schools that Nietzsche will endeavour to refashion the tasks of morality. He writes, for example, of transforming the passions of humanity into 'delights' (*WS* 37; see also *Z*:I "Of Joys and Passions"), of a morality of continual self-mastery and self-overcoming in both the largest and smallest of things (*WS* 45), of an ethics based on the individual virtues such as justice and peace of mind (*WS* 212). In all of this, the task is to become "spiritually joyful, bright, and sincere" (*WS* 88).

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More than this, free spirits are willing to "*look directly at* the great task of *preparing* the earth for a growth in the greatest and happiest fertility" (*WS* 189). If we call upon the thinker for assistance we do so not simply as an educator but rather "as someone self-educated," one who has experience (*WS* 267).

We hold that it is clear that this conception of the self-educator, one who has educated himself through "experience," is fully at work and on display in the narrative of *Zarathustra*. However, although Nietzsche draws heavily in *Zarathustra* on the themes, motifs, and imagery he has sketched out in his middle writings, his conception of philosophy as a way of life, as opposed to an appreciation of philosophy as pure knowledge, now takes on a highly dramatic form with philosophy given the task of generating in free-spirited beings the desire for self-transformation, involving willing their own down-going (*Untergang*), and heralding a transformation of the earth. Before we come to this, let us consider how Nietzsche's conception of philosophy and criticism of scholars is dramatized in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*.

2.2 The Critique of Philosophy and of Wise Men in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

The conception of philosophy as a way of life contains in itself a sharp criticism of academic philosophy. Hadot contrasts it very explicitly with the way philosophy is conceived and practiced in current universities, where philosophy is reduced to mere philosophical discourse or discourse *about* philosophy: "modern philosophy," Hadot claims, "is first and foremost a discourse developed in the classroom and then consigned to books" (Hadot 1995: 271). Its aim is no longer the education of individuals toward complete and flourishing lives but the formation of specialists, who are then supposed to train other specialists in the context of the state educational institution. It has thus become a purely academic specialism with no practical effect or implications. As such, Hadot complains, "in modern university philosophy, philosophy is obviously no longer a way of life or form of life – unless it be the form of life of a professor of philosophy" (Hadot 1995: 271).

We have seen how in his earlier and middle writings Nietzsche criticizes the modern professionalization of philosophy and endorses a similar model of philosophical practice. *Zarathustra* is a text that can be brought into close rapport with both the early and middle Nietzsche in a number of ways, and indeed in a letter to Franz Overbeck of 1884 Nietzsche writes

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wittily, referring to *Zarathustra*, that he "did the commentary *before* writing the text" (*KSB* 6: 504). This is particularly evident in Nietzsche's conception of philosophy and corresponding critique of scholarly or purely theoretical philosophy, which in many ways anticipates the main traits of Hadot's account. For example, in the discourse entitled "On Scholars" in Part II of *Zarathustra* Nietzsche can be seen as renewing the critique of scholars he had first developed in *Schopenhauer as Educator*, and that then features again in chapter six of *Beyond Good and Evil*. The problem with scholars is that "they want to be mere spectators in everything," taking care "not to sit where the sun burns upon the steps," choosing instead to simply "stare at thoughts that others have thought" (*Z*:II "On Scholars"). They "crack knowledge as one cracks nuts" and inhabit "dusty rooms" (*Z*:II "On Scholars"). *Zarathustra* also echoes the key motifs Nietzsche has put into play in his middle writings. The imagery of 'dawn' and heralding of 'new dawns' features prominently and in a recurrent manner in the text (*Z*:III "On Old and New Law-Tables" 3). In addition, Nietzsche once again proffers the idea that human society is to be regarded not as a contract but as an "experiment" (*Z*:III "On Old and New Law-Tables" 25; compare *D* 453), and the text highlights the intellectual virtues he has stated in the middle writings as being of special importance for the philosophical practice of modern free spirits, including "one of the youngest virtues," namely, honesty (*Z*:I "Of the Afterworldsmen"; *D* 456). Furthermore, the human "will to truth" needs to be earth-bound, harnessed to "the humanly-conceivable" and "the humanly-palpable" (*Z*:II "On the Blessed Isles"). As is made clear in this discourse in the text, enlightened free spirits – that is, spirits who have incorporated into their practice of truthfulness elements of cold, sceptical, rational and sober inquiry – can feel at home "neither in the incomprehensible nor in the irrational" (*Z*:II "On the Blessed Isles"). Furthermore, all the conceptions of classical metaphysics, such as "the one," "the perfect," "the unmoved" and "the intransitory," are to be regarded as 'misanthropic' (*Z*:II "On the Blessed Isles").

The discourse on "The Famous Wise Men," featured in Part II of *Zarathustra*, contains valuable clues as to the nature of Nietzsche's appreciation of philosophy, in particular how he conceives the free-spirited philosopher as a figure who is "the enemy of fetters" and "the non-worshipper," and who dwells in a particular domain, namely, the forests. This discourse affords valuable insight into how we can productively construe Nietzsche as advocating in *Zarathustra* a particular practice of philosophy as a way of life, and it rests on a critique of alternative

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conceptions of philosophy, including and most notably philosophy conceived as a form of contemplation and in the manner of "immaculate perception."

The discourse on "the famous wise men" makes it clear that for Nietzsche 'truth' is a free-spirited notion, and this means it cannot be found wherever the will to truth is placed in the service of the common life of the people since this is to restrict truth to the "superstitions of the people," as well as, one might add, to their prejudices and presumptions (*Z*:II "On the Famous Wise Men"). Of necessity, then, since their commitment is to finding and positing uncommon truths, the free-spirited philosopher is not a figure who resides in the town or city but rather outside their walls, and hence Nietzsche's reference in this discourse to the genuine philosopher as a dweller of the forests. Again, it is in the middle writings that we find valuable clues needed to make sense of this curious reference to the forests. In *The Wanderer and His Shadow* Nietzsche outlines, with special reference to Epicurus, a conception of philosophical practice as 'heroic-idyllic' (*WS* 295). Epicurus is well-known for practising philosophy in his garden and with a community of friends and like-minded free spirits. Although references to gardens and garden philosophy abound in *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche now conceives of the genuine philosopher as dwelling in a specific location, namely, the forest. In *Mixed Opinions and Maxims*, and inspired by the example of Goethe, Nietzsche writes of a "poetry of the future" and assigns to poetry (*Dichtung*) a specific task. He suggests that the role of the poet is not to portray present times or to reanimate and condense the past, but rather to show the way to the future. The poet – the artist in the broadest sense as one who "invents" and "creates" – is to do this by composing and recomposing "images of beautiful human beings," and by indicating that such humans are still possible "*in the midst* of our modern world" (*AOM* 99). This is not an easy task when we take into account what Nietzsche says elsewhere in this text, chiefly, that today's poets live in too close a proximity to "the sewers of the big cities" (*AOM* 111). This theme is continued in *The Gay Science* where Nietzsche writes of the need for "preparatory courageous human beings" who will emerge out of, and in spite of, "the sand and slime of present-day civilization and metropolitanism" (*GS* 283). We can note that the concern with the cultivation of beautiful human beings greatly occupies Nietzsche's attention in *Zarathustra*, notably in the discourse on "The Sublime Ones," where Zarathustra says that one should return from "the forest of knowledge" not in a state of gloominess, and as does the sublime human who displays "ugliness" and needs to become a "penitent of the spirit." In the discourse, the

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beautiful is configured in terms of notions of gracefulness, generosity of spirit, and self-overpowering, "Beauty is unattainable to all violent wills" (*Z*:II "On the Sublime Ones"). Furthermore, in "The Greeting" chapter in Part IV of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche has Zarathustra invite his guests to speak to him of his "gardens," his "Blessed Isles" and his "beautiful new race."

Another important discourse for an appreciation of Nietzsche's conception of philosophy in *Zarathustra*, including the possibilities it offers for a renewed conception of philosophy as a way of life, is the discourse from Part II entitled "Of Immaculate Perception." It brings together in a single discourse many of Nietzsche's concerns that are played out in the book as a whole, including his criticism of the commitment to pure knowledge that echoes Epicurus' attack on purely contemplative philosophy or the pursuit of knowledge as an end in itself, his attachment to a notion of beauty and the motif of the dawn of day. The discourse commences with a reference to the moon rising the day before and Zarathustra expecting it to give birth to a sun, so pregnant does it seem. This is a clear reference to "cold" knowledge containing within it the seeds of new possibilities of thinking, feeling and willing; in short it is a reference to the passion of knowledge (see *D* 429). However, Zarathustra has allowed himself to be deceived by the moon, and there is more of man in it than there is woman. This is not much of a man, though, since he reveals himself to be a "timid night-reveller"; he is "catlike" and "without honesty." This is a parable that Zarathustra narrates to "sentimental hypocrites of 'pure knowledge'." Although full of lust, their desire is not focused on the need for difficult or hard (unsentimental) knowledge that allows the philosopher to posit new conceptions and emotions of the kind that lead to self-transformation and even the creation of new peoples (see *Z*:III: "On Old and New Law Tables" 25, 28).

Although the seekers of pure knowledge love the earth and all things earthly, they have a bad conscience in their love and are just like the moon. Their love of things of the earth is combined with a healthy contempt of the earthly too, but this does not then express itself as a desire for transforming the earth. Rather, they want to love the earth only as the moon does, touching its beauty "with the eyes alone" (*Z*:II "On Immaculate Perception"). They wish, in short, only to gaze and not to create: "And let this be called by me my *immaculate perception* of all things: that I desire nothing of things, except that I may lie down before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes" (*Z*:II "On Immaculate Perception"). To this Zarathustra sternly replies, "Truly, you do not love the earth as creators, begetters, men joyful at entering upon a new existence!"

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(*Z*:II "On Immaculate Perception"). Zarathustra then makes an appeal to "innocence" and "beauty," declaring that beauty resides in a courageous will, namely, where one has to will with all one's will, including where the will welcomes its own perishing, so that "an image may not remain merely an image" (*Z*:II "On Immaculate Perception"). At work in this whole discourse may be an oblique set of references to the image of the sun in Plato, the contemplative philosopher of ideal forms par excellence, and how we are to emerge from the cave so as to contemplate the eternal form of the Good represented by the sun. Clearly, the sun is operating quite differently in Nietzsche, signalling the arrival of new life and new dawns, in short, new possibilities of life. We can also note that aspects of Nietzsche's criticism of the famous wise men may also be directed at Aristotle, who famously construes contemplation as the highest mode of a philosophically-inspired existence (on Nietzsche on Aristotle, see Loeb 2017a).

In linking together so potently in this discourse the will to love with the will to one's death, Nietzsche is harking back to his conception of the genuine philosopher in *Dawn* where he argues that the most beautiful virtue of the great thinker radiates from the magnanimity "with which he, as a person of knowledge, undauntedly, often ashamed, often with sublime mockery and smiling—offers himself and his life in sacrifice" (*D* 459). It is worth noting that this aphorism from *Dawn* is in large part an attack on the likes of Rousseau and Schopenhauer, both of whom professed, following the motto of Juvenal, to have dedicated their lives to truth, but who, Nietzsche holds, did not possess the intellectual maturity that would have enabled them to dedicate truth *to life*. Rather, both thinkers were vain and sought only in truth and knowledge a mirror of themselves. For Nietzsche this is especially the case with Schopenhauer, whose philosophy is to be regarded as the mirroring of a "character," a melancholic one at that, and that reveals an "interesting vehement ugliness" (*D* 481).

The idea that the passion of knowledge is a practice of knowledge that requires a self-sacrificing humanity is one that Nietzsche has already floated in *The Gay Science* in his account of preparatory human beings. He describes these preparatory ones in a specific way: they will be "silent, solitary, resolute"; they will be distinguished "by cheerfulness, patience, unpretentiousness, and contempt for all great vanities as by magnanimity in victory and forbearance regarding the small vanities of the vanquished"; and, finally, in addition to having their own festivals, working days, and periods of mourning, they will be "more endangered human beings, more fruitful human beings, happier beings!" (*GS* 283). In living dangerously, the preparatory ones will be prepared to make sacrifices, that is, sacrifices of

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themselves and for the benefit of a future to come. This mode of life is their pride, their happiness, and their reason for existence. Nietzsche concludes this aphorism as follows: "Soon the ages will be past when you could be content to live hidden in forests like shy deer. At long last the search for knowledge will reach out for its due; it will want to *rule* and *possess*, and you with it!" (*GS* 283).

Let us return to Nietzsche's attack on the practitioners of pure knowledge in "Of Immaculate Perception." He labels them "deceivers" and "contemplatives," clearly revealing his consternation at the fact that the philosopher can have a desire for knowledge without wanting this to have any transformative effects. He even acknowledges that he too once thought there was no better art than the art of pure knowledge, and this self-criticism may be directed at the position he had promoted in *Human, all too Human* (see *HH* 7). The discourse concludes on a powerful note with Nietzsche indicating that through knowledge we can elevate ourselves and come to cultivate within ourselves, as experiments and sites of self-overcoming and self-sacrifice, a non-vain desire for the advancement and enhancement of life. The conception of knowledge advanced here is fully in accord with the depiction of the philosopher's magnanimity presented in aphorism 459 of *Dawn* and a clear expression of philosophy as a way of life:

> But I *approached* you: then day dawned for me and now it dawns for you the moon's love affair had come to an end!
>
> Just look! There it stands, pale and detected before the dawn!
>
> For already it is coming, the glowing sun *its* love of the earth is coming! All sun love is innocence and creative desire!
>
> Just look how it comes impatiently over the sea! . . . It wants to suck at the sea and drink the sea's depths up to its height . . . It *wants* to be kissed and sucked by the sun's thirst, it *wants* to become air and height and light's footpath and light itself!
>
> Truly, like the sun do I love life and all deep seas.
>
> And this *I* call knowledge: all that is deep shall rise up to my height! (*Z*:II "On Immaculate Perception")

2.3 Self-transformation and Conversion in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

We have attempted to show how from his earlier writings until *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* Nietzsche develops a substantial critique of scholarly philosophy and endorses a model of philosophical practice that resonates with

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Hadot's conception of philosophy as a way of life. Let us now see how this model is displayed and put into practice in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* on the level of self-transformation and conversion to a new way of life.

According to John Sellars, transformation of one's way of life is the ultimate motivation of philosophy conceived as a way of life (Sellars 2017: 41). In one of his multiple formulations, Hadot defines it as "a method of spiritual progress" that demands "a radical conversion and transformation of the individual's way of being" (Hadot 1995: 265). This conversion and transformation are achieved through the constant pursuit and activation of wisdom, which as we have seen is not to be externally acquired or simply learned, but incorporated or embodied, in such a way that it becomes a way of life, that is, a total "mode of existing-in-the-world" (Hadot 1995: 265). We have shown how in his middle writings, such as *Dawn* and *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche has sought to clarify what it means to cultivate the passion of knowledge and defined our new task today as one of learning how to incorporate truth and knowledge. These conceptions are dramatically put to work in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* when through its main character Nietzsche's passion of knowledge assumes "bodily form" and gives itself the task of enhancing the human species and giving a new meaning to the earth. Zarathustra is precisely that thinker who "considers truthfulness to be the highest virtue" and as such "has more courage in his body than all thinkers put together"; his peculiar virtue, Nietzsche claims, is "to speak the truth and *shoot well with an arrow*" (*EH* "Destiny" 3). In so doing, Zarathustra brings together that "species of courage" and "extravagant generosity" that has hitherto "been *lacking* in mankind" (*D* 551), that kind of wisdom that out of its honesty, coldness, vigour and exuberance opens up new ways of thinking, feeling and living and "tells us something of the *possible*" (*EH* "Destiny" 3).

The *possible* is, in this case, Zarathustra's own way of life, which is also his true teaching. It is not a coincidence that Nietzsche considers *Zarathustra* "a new sacred book" (*KSB* 6: 404) or a "fifth 'Gospel'" (*KSB* 6: 375) and that many of its stylistic aspects and motifs are modelled after the Bible. Just like Christ in the New Testament, Zarathustra *is* the message, the wisdom and the truth, the possibility of a new dawn, a new meaning of the earth, a new redemption of the world and, above all, the expression of Nietzsche's hope in a self-overcoming of mankind. For Zarathustra, people are "something unformed, matter, an ugly stone that needs a sculptor" (*EH* Z:8) and, as the Prologue famously declares, "Man is something that should be overcome" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3). As a sculptor of a future humanity, Zarathustra teaches a new kind of faith that "*shall be*

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the meaning of the earth" after the death of all gods – a meaning that must be built and created anew through the same courage, magnanimity and self-sacrificing spirit that Zarathustra embodies and aims to cultivate in free-spirited human beings:

> And this is the great noontide: it is when man stands at the middle of his course between animal and Superhuman and celebrates his journey to the evening as his highest hope: for it is the journey to a new morning.
>
> Then man, going under, will bless himself; for he will be going over to the Superhuman; and the sun of his knowledge will stand at noontide.
>
> "*All gods are dead: now we want the Superhuman to live*" let this be our last will one day at the great noontide! (*Z*:I "Of the Bestowing Virtue" 3)

The metaphors of the "great noontide" and the "new morning" – just as "midday," "dawn" and others that abound in the text – are of great significance here and show how *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is perhaps the moment in Nietzsche's work where his philosophical practice comes closest to what Hadot described as philosophy as a way of life. The metaphors point to the ideas of renewal, renovation, rebirth, and they indicate the appearance or eruption of something new, which even though bearing a relation with the past also implies a break, a scission, a rupture with a previous condition or state of affairs. Both the idea of rupture and the idea of a new start or a new beginning are involved in what Hadot describes as the "philosophical conversion" that is at the core of philosophy as a way of life, especially but not exclusively as conceived among Stoics and Epicureans. Indeed, Hadot holds that throughout the history of Western thought, philosophy has been "essentially an act of conversion" (Hadot 2020: 102), and by this he means the following:

> In all its forms, philosophical conversion is the tearing away from and breaking with the everyday, the familiar, the falsely 'natural' attitude of common sense. It is the return to the original and the originary, to the authentic, to interiority, to the essential. It is absolute new beginning, a new starting point which transforms past and future. . . . In any way it presents itself, philosophical conversion is the access to inner freedom, to a new perception of the world, to authentic existence. (Hadot 2020: 102)

Hadot characterizes it as a "decisive illumination" (Hadot 2020: 99), one that provokes a radical transformation of one's way of life. Significantly, Zarathustra is compared to a sun that must "descend into the depths" in order to "bring light to the underworld" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 1). Retrospectively, Nietzsche calls *Zarathustra* a "revelation of truth"

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(*EH Z*:6), something that "throws you down and leaves you deeply shaken" (*EH* Z:3). Both in the religious and in the philosophical contexts, it is this moment of awakening and enlightenment that makes us question our most ordinary and rooted habits, thoughts and feelings and embrace a totally new way of thinking, feeling and inhabiting the world.

This is a process that does not come about spontaneously, but rather requires the intermediation and guidance of somebody who has himself gone through this process of self-transformation and is able to communicate to others his own experience and awaken in them the desire to go through the same process of conversion to another way of life. Mirroring the figure of the wise man in antiquity, Zarathustra is an educator who has first educated himself, a converter who is himself "converted" or, in the formulations of *Zarathustra*, "an awakened-one" speaking to "the sleepers" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 2). The means of communication are extremely important in this context, which is why in ancient philosophical schools, just like in *Zarathustra*, "the means of rhetoric and logic are put in service of the conversion of souls" (Hadot 2020: 96). In philosophy as a way of life, and as evident in Zarathustra's speeches, discourse is not meant to simply convey a theory to listeners or readers, but rather to provoke this awakening, inviting individuals to remove themselves from their common ways of life and calling for a new way of being and existing in the world.

If this performative use of language can be generally attested in Nietzsche's highly unconventional style – at least when compared to the traditional forms of philosophical discourse – it is clearly exacerbated in *Zarathustra*, where self-transformation and conversion might be said to lie at its core. Thus, Zarathustra's speeches – just as all the allegories, parables, visions, riddles, enigmas, poems, anecdotes, songs and dances that compose the narrative – are clearly not meant to merely teach something to his listeners or readers, but also aim to actually *do* something to them. In their performative aspects they are essentially tools to cultivate in human beings a desire for self-transformation and the creation of a new human-superhuman way of life. Particularly noteworthy in this regard are the spiritual gymnastics that Zarathustra undergoes throughout the text in order to deal with the numerous challenges and obstacles that he finds in his way, as well as the powerful images of self-overcoming and self-transformation that he not only displays but often incorporates, most notably the image of the shepherd biting the "heavy, black snake" after which he is "no longer a shepherd, no longer a man" but "a transformed being, surrounded with light, *laughing*," with a "laughter that was no human laughter" (*Z*:III "On the Vision and the Riddle" 2) – a

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transmutation that Zarathustra himself undergoes at the end of Part III, signaling the end of the "down-going" that he had started in the Prologue (*Z*:III "The Convalescent" 2). In this context, it has been noted how these spiritual gymnastics that Zarathustra undergoes throughout the narrative, and most notably the thought of the eternal return, the incorporation and acceptance of which produces the radical self-transformation just mentioned, can be equated to the spiritual exercises with which Hadot characterizes the practice of philosophy as a way of life (see Hadot 1995: 82–109). These exercises are practices specifically designed to change our way of living on the basis of a new perception of the world and indeed, as Ure notes, the eternal return is "an exercise through which we transform our present life such that we would desire its eternal repetition" (Ure 2018: 95). By embodying not only a new way of life, but also the spiritual exercises and transitions needed to get there, Zarathustra teaches this new way by experiencing it and also putting it to the ultimate test of seeing "whether one can live in accordance with it" (*SE* 8).

According to Hadot, philosophical conversion has the same radical and totalizing character as religious conversion (Hadot 2020: 96), and *Zarathustra* certainly plays with this religious dimension in which "God's initiative irrupts into the world, introducing a radical novelty into the course of history" that is "often delivered in a sacred book, demands absolute adhesion, a complete break with the past, a consecration of one's whole being" (Hadot 2020: 100). As Michel Foucault makes clear in his analysis of Cynic conversion, however, what distinguishes the philosophical form of conversion from the religious one is that whereas the latter constitutes a movement to "an *other* life" as the condition for access to "the other world" (*l'autre monde*), philosophy aspires to and aims to build a "life which is other" (*une vie autre*) as a means to promote a "world which is other" (*un monde autre*) (Foucault 2011: 247, 287, translation modified). We see this intention at play in the whole of *Zarathustra*, which in the twenty-two speeches that make up the first part of the narrative, summarizes the main traits of the "life which is other" that Zarathustra aims to promote, cultivate and indeed convert us to.

The idea of *otherness* is here fundamental, firstly because it is mainly in opposition to our current life that Zarathustra's new way of life emerges, and second because it is precisely *otherness* that it aims to teach and promote: otherness in the way we think, feel and evaluate, otherness in the way we judge ourselves, others and the world, otherness in the way we conceive ourselves and our life possibilities to be. Zarathustra wants to free human beings from the fear and superstition of religious phantasms,

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slavish moralities, and life-denying ideals that demand the same "Thou shalt" for all, and to awaken them to the infinite possibilities of thinking, feeling, judging, doing and being *otherwise*. Above all, Zarathustra is concerned with another sense of gratitude, beauty and joyful being in the world – a world that in the lives of those who accept the challenge of creation, experimentation and self-overcoming, also becomes *other*, thus providing a new meaning to the earth. As Zarathustra pleads in his last speech of the book's first part:

> Stay loyal to the earth, my brothers, with the power of your virtue! May your bestowing love and your knowledge serve towards the meaning of the earth! Thus I beg and entreat you. [. . .]
>
> Lead, as I do, the flown away virtue back to earth yes, back to body and life: that it may give the earth its meaning, a human meaning! [. . .]
>
> May your spirit and your virtue serve the meaning of the earth, my brothers: and may the value of all things be fixed anew by you. To that end you should be fighters! To that end you should be creators!
>
> There are a thousand paths that have never yet been trodden, a thousand forms of health and hidden islands of life. Man and man's earth are still unexhausted and undiscovered. (*Z*:I "Of the Bestowing Virtue" 2)

Throughout the narrative, Zarathustra stresses several times that such a transformation of human beings and the human world cannot come about without much destruction and sacrifice, and indeed without willingness to perish for the sake of this new meaning of the earth, which Zarathustra epitomizes in the superhuman. In this context, it has been argued that the superhuman repeats the same pattern that we find in the case of the ascetic ideal, in which human life is accorded value only to the extent that it is a means to something that brings about its negation (see Clark 1990: 273). This concern can perhaps be allayed by appealing to a note from the time of *Dawn* where Nietzsche says that there is need for a new "non-ascetic renunciation of the world" (*KSA* 9:7[197]). This significantly distances his position from any residual attachment to the ascetic ideal: the concern is not with creating anything otherworldly or transcendent, anything unearthly, as is the case with ascetic ideals, but rather with fostering a richer, deeper and more beautiful humanity, indeed, to the point where there would emerge a new species. This does not imply a simple negation but a self-overcoming or, one could say, a self-sublation of current humanity that would mark, in Hadot's words, an "absolute new beginning," a "new starting point which transforms past and future."

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It is worth stressing the extent to which Nietzsche has been foregrounding a discourse on sacrifice, with reference to both an experimental self-sacrificing humanity and the character of the magnanimous philosopher, well before *Zarathustra* and the positing of the superhuman. Clark wishes to focus critical attention on the figure of the superhuman in Nietzsche, but she fails to appreciate the extent to which the key philosophical project at work in his middle writings is an anticipation of, and preparation for, what is being presented and posited in *Zarathustra* (see, for example, *D* 45, 459; and *GS* 283). So, although one might have concerns about the positing of the superhuman they need to be informed by an appreciation of the middle writings, one that would show the extent to which the idea of a self-sacrificing humanity is far from being an idiosyncratic feature of Nietzsche's philosophizing.

2.4 Conclusion

Nietzsche's global concern with the earth and the human as a species in *Zarathustra* is an aspect that distinguishes his philosophical project from the much narrower and limited aims of Hellenistic philosophers. Even though Nietzsche's philosophy can also be considered therapeutic on a cultural level – and perhaps even on an individual one in his middle period – it is clear that the goals he sets for himself, as well as for free spirits and future philosophers in different moments of his work, go beyond the prescription of a way of life intended to secure peace of mind and freedom from suffering or disturbance of the soul. And yet, if there is something that Nietzsche never abandons throughout his entire productive life it is the conviction that philosophy should not be allowed to become a purely abstract and innocuous discipline, consigned to "dusty" books and sterile classrooms, with no impact on one's life and character. For Nietzsche, just as for the Hellenists, and in coincidence with Hadot's account, philosophy is a deeply performative and transformative practice, one that demands total commitment from its practitioners and that opens up the possibility of a radical conversion of one's whole being.

As we have tried to show, however, Nietzsche does not restrict the conception of philosophy as a way of life to a single task. Sometimes philosophy is identified in Nietzsche with *Bildung* or self-cultivation, as in his Basel lectures on the future of educational institutions, and this is a theme one might see at work in the middle writings and also informing parts of *Zarathustra*. Also at work in Nietzsche is an appreciation of philosophy as the mode of thinking and way of being in the world that

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discovers "beautiful possibilities of life" (*PT* 143–144), and we see this at work in his early work on the pre-Platonic philosophers and then renewed in *Human, all too Human* (for example, *HH* 261). Finally, especially in *Zarathustra*, philosophy is to apply itself to the task of cultivating noble and singular individuals, and ultimately therefore, in Nietzsche philosophy as a way of life is to dedicate itself to the cause of promoting superior human types, ones who are able to affirm life and provide a new meaning to the earth (*Z*:I "Of the Tree on the Mountainside").

We have sought to show how this conception of philosophy develops throughout Nietzsche's early and middle writings until it reaches its most dramatic and expressive form in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which is perhaps the best example in Nietzsche's *corpus* of him not only advocating but practicing and teaching philosophy as a way of life. With *Zarathustra* Nietzsche has clearly chosen to write in a specific manner, eschewing the forms of the treatise and the essay, even the quasi-scientific report, and constructing an alter ego instead of writing in his own voice. Within these choices we can identify a criticism of, and alternative to, the academic and professionalized practice of philosophy that today has become the norm. As Hadot notes, the intention of an author is inscribed not only in the content but also in the form of his or her works, such that "the first way to recognize the author's intention is to look for the literary genre to which the text belongs" (Hadot 2009: 64). In the case of *Zarathustra*, and similarly to other works in the philosophy as a way of life tradition, it is clear that the form and genre of the text is strictly dependent on the effect of (trans)formation Nietzsche wanted to provoke in his readers. In fact, the majority of Nietzsche's works are written in unconventional forms and designed to have a similar effect of formation in the context of a genuine philosophical education, one which modern universities are unable to provide. What is particular about *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is that Zarathustra *personifies* the theories, doctrines and values he wishes to convey. Zarathustra is not simply a fictional substitute of Nietzsche. He teaches through his speeches and, most importantly, he teaches through his own example, his own life and his own experience. His journey is itself a journey of self-transformation and self-formation (with many difficulties, resistances, self-overcomings) that he wishes to share with others. So, it might be claimed, what he shares and what he teaches is first and foremost his *way of life*. In so doing he comes close to the wise human being in antiquity, whose philosophy was conveyed not only by his teachings but also by his own life. In this sense, *Zarathustra* recovers, to a great extent, the personal, communal and dialogical character of philosophy in

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antiquity, as well as the form of "teaching by example", which, as Hadot stresses, was so fundamental and yet has been almost irremediably lost in contemporary academic philosophy (see Hadot 2009: 54ff.).

In short, with *Zarathustra*, which features all of his mature teachings and ideas, Nietzsche appears keen to gain a wider and more practically oriented audience than academic philosophy allows for. We wish to contend, therefore, that taking seriously a philosophical work like *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is of the utmost importance today. With the rise of neoliberalism, education is perhaps even more threatened by increasing professionalization and policing than it was in Nietzsche's (or even Hadot's) time. Students are increasingly treated as consumers, with teachers expected to be dispensers of readily digestible information. In today's university culture there is a growing absence of genuine education and a lack of genuine educators who would teach the virtues of self-cultivation and self-overcoming. Nietzsche saw the crisis coming and Hadot valiantly reacted against it with his appreciation of philosophy as a way of life. Their conceptions of philosophy as a way of life retain their pertinence and potency today, not only as important forms of resistance to current university educational practices, but also as important reminders of the original vocation of philosophy and its role in transforming human lives.[2]

[2] The authors wish to thank Paul Loeb for his pertinent and challenging feedback that has helped us improve the essay and finesse our interpretation of Nietzsche.

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CHAPTER 3

What Makes the Affirmation of Life Difficult?

Paul Katsafanas

Nietzsche repeatedly claims that *Zarathustra* is his most important philosophical work (*EH* P:4; *EH* Z:6; *EH* Z:8). He tells us that the core idea of *Zarathustra* is the eternal recurrence (*EH* Z:1, 8). Moreover, he associates eternal recurrence with "the highest formula of affirmation that is at all attainable" (*EH* Z:1; see also *BGE* 56, *EH* "Clever" 10).[1] And he suggests that most of us will fail to attain this highest form of affirmation; most of us, when confronted with the thought of eternal recurrence, will either fail to appreciate the thought or will be plunged into despair (*GS* 341). In short: Nietzsche thinks that his most important thought in his most important work is that most of us cannot truly affirm life.[2]

That much is clear; unfortunately, much else is mysterious. The idea of eternal recurrence is evocative but cryptic. There are a number of scholarly controversies concerning how it should be interpreted and what problem it is intended to pose. I think we can make progress on these matters by asking a very simple question: why is affirming eternal recurrence supposed to be more difficult than affirming a non-recurring, singular life? Once we raise this question, a number of traditional interpretations of eternal recurrence begin to look problematic.

Section 3.1 introduces the problem, arguing that an adequate interpretation of eternal recurrence will have to show why affirming recurring lives is more difficult than affirming singular lives. The next four sections consider some influential interpretations of eternal recurrence, which attribute the difficulty of affirming eternal recurrence to the inescapability of suffering (Section 3.2), the interconnectedness of events (Section 3.3), the valuation of permanence (Section 3.4), and vengefulness (Section 3.5).

[1] The following translations are used in this chapter: *BGE* (1968); *BT* (1968); *EH* (1968); *GM* (1968); *GS* (1974); *TI* (1954); *Z* (1954).

[2] Of course, this is coupled with a more positive thought: we can strive to become capable of affirming life. *GS* 341 is sandwiched between *GS* 340, which discusses Socrates' condemnation of life, and *GS* 342, which points us toward Zarathustra, who ultimately succeeds in affirming life.

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I argue that none of these interpretations can offer a good account of why affirming recurring lives would be more difficult than affirming singular lives. In Section 3.6, I offer a new interpretation of eternal recurrence, which attributes its difficulty to the conditional nature of ordinary affirmation. Affirmation is conditional when it depends on the possibility of excising objectionable elements from the object of affirmation. What Nietzsche means to reveal, with eternal recurrence, is that even the most apparently affirmative individuals often manifest only a conditional affirmation of life, a form of affirmation that conceals a tacit negation. Eternal recurrence brings this hidden negation to light, thereby encouraging us to move toward an unconditionally affirmative stance. In Section 3.7, I conclude by reflecting on why Nietzsche takes the distinction between conditional and unconditional affirmation to be such an important philosophical idea. I argue that those who devote themselves to challenging, long-term goals will face psychological pressures that tend to deform unconditional affirmation into conditional affirmation.

3.1 The Affirmation of Life

We can all think of things that might make life seem problematic. Pervasive suffering; the collapse of traditional sources of meaning or direction; the entanglement of good events with bad ones; ennui; the perceived valuelessness of pursuits; the banality of many forms of modern life. Or, to pick some non-Nietzschean candidates: injustice; the viciousness of human beings; unending conflict and war; environmental collapse; and one could go on and on.

Suppose you are worried about these things. And suppose that you come to a view like this: although there is plenty that is bad about the world, you see a way of being positively disposed toward it. You think life is worth living, despite these objectionable features. Moreover, you do not think this affirmative attitude rests on any false presuppositions or reflectively unstable beliefs. You have thought carefully about life, you have cleared away illusions and false beliefs, and you have found a way of affirming life. Your affirmation could be grounded in any number of ways: perhaps it is mindful engagement with particulars; perhaps it is having some great creative goal to which you are devoted; perhaps it is throwing yourself into political struggle; perhaps it is love; perhaps it is the quiet comforts of home.

I want to emphasize that *many* people find themselves in this position. Over the years, I have discussed Nietzsche's ideas about affirmation with hundreds of students and dozens of philosophers, and by far the most

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common reaction that I have encountered is the belief that life is affirmable. It is rare to find anyone who thinks that life is perfect; but it is equally rare to find those who reject life. Most people take themselves to affirm life, though of course it is unusual for them to put it this way until they are introduced to the Nietzschean terminology.[3]

It is possible that these individuals are self-deceived, confused, or thoughtless. It is possible that if we cleared away these distortions and deceptions, these individuals would negate life. Perhaps most of us are in that state: after all, Nietzsche emphasizes the opacity of the human mind, the mendacity of individuals, the pervasiveness of self-deception, the inability to understand our own motives and values. In short: it is possible that most or all cases of apparent life-affirmation would turn out to be illusory once we clear away these sorts of epistemic failings.

But even if that were true, it would not by itself explain *why* the thought of eternal recurrence is supposed to render affirmation difficult. To see this, let us imagine one of these perfectly ordinary individuals, someone who takes herself to affirm life. She is thoughtful, serious, and thorough in her reflections: she attends to all of the horrors of existence but nonetheless thinks that life is on balance affirmable, perhaps because she sees the bad in life as potentially correctible, or perhaps because she sees the good in life as potentially outweighing the bad. Then you confront her with the thought of eternal recurrence. You tell her: your life, as you have lived it, will repeat endlessly, with no details changed. Everything will come back to you, again and again. You will have no capacity to alter anything.

How might the putatively affirmative individual respond? Nietzsche expects a dramatic reaction:

> Would you not throw yourself down and gnash your teeth and curse the demon who spoke thus? Or have you once experienced a tremendous moment when you would have answered him: "You are a god, and never have I heard anything more divine." If this thought gained power over you, as you are it would transform and possibly crush you; the question in each and every thing, "Do you want this again and innumerable times again?" would lie on your actions as the heaviest weight! Or how well disposed would you have to become to yourself and to life to long for nothing more fervently than for this ultimate eternal confirmation and seal? (*GS* 341)

[3] And Nietzsche knows this. First, consider his discussions of the last men: "'we have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink." (*Z*:I "Prologue" 5). The last men are content, albeit superficially so. Second, Nietzsche defines the "omni-satisfied" as "those who consider everything good and this world the best . . . Always to bray Yea-Yuh—that only the ass has learned, and whoever is of his spirit" (*Z*:III "Spirit of Gravity"). Although both the last men and the omni-satisfied are presented in disparaging ways, Nietzsche acknowledges that they take themselves to affirm life.

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Nietzsche lists two possible reactions to the thought of recurring lives: despair, which he suggests is the most common reaction; and joy, which is rare. Nietzsche thus suggests that someone who *believes* that she affirms life can find herself devastated by the thought of eternal recurrence. Indeed, Nietzsche's texts emphasize just this point: putatively affirmative individuals typically despair when confronted with eternal recurrence. This is, after all, what happens to Zarathustra: he takes himself to be the teacher of how to reconcile oneself with existence, how to be well-disposed toward life (*Z*:I "Prologue"). But then he is confronted with eternal recurrence and he is broken (*Z*:III "Vision and Riddle"). He is incapacitated; he cannot go on until he finds a way of reorienting himself in light of this thought (*Z*:III "Convalescent"). And a similar dynamic occurs in *GS*: from *GS* 125 onward, Nietzsche repeatedly emphasizes that people who seem content with the death of God may be unaware of some deeper problem: the "shadows of god," the lingering concepts, values, and orientations that permeate our lives but that presuppose a religious context. And he urges us to become well-disposed toward life, discovering the malleability in our ways of experiencing events, striving for ever more affirmative modes of experiencing life (see esp. *GS* 107, 276, 277, 290, 299, 301). In *GS* 340, we are told that the seemingly affirmative Socrates, who especially in Nietzsche's time was taken as a sign of exuberant, affirmative life, had in fact tacitly rejected life. And then in the next section we are presented with eternal recurrence, prompting us to ask whether the same might be true of us: even if we think we are well disposed toward life, might we be incapable of affirming life in some deeper sense? *GS* 342 then invites us to read *Zarathustra*.[4]

If we keep this context in mind, we can see that Nietzsche intends eternal recurrence to present even the most apparently affirmative individuals with a problem. Contemplating eternal recurrence is supposed to be *more difficult* than contemplating a singular life. Someone who thinks that she is affirming life, that she is well-disposed toward it, could be traumatized by contemplating eternal recurrence.[5]

Accordingly, Nietzsche must think that eternal recurrence presents some *new, distinctive* problem, a problem that either does not arise or is not apparent when contemplating singular lives. If we are to understand

[4] The final sentence of *GS* 341, especially when taken as leading into *GS* 342 and *Z*, suggests that someone who is traumatized by eternal recurrence might strive to change that fact, moving toward a fully affirmative reaction.

[5] Compare *KSA* 12:5[71], which suggests that eternal recurrence can be "the most extreme form of nihilism"; it can drive home the thought that existence is "without meaning or goal" and thereby deprive us of traditional forms of protection "from despair."

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eternal recurrence, we will need to understand what this problem is. I will treat this as a criterion of adequacy for interpretations of eternal recurrence: an acceptable interpretation of eternal recurrence must explain why it is more difficult to affirm recurring lives than singular lives.

3.2 Affirmation Is Difficult Because Life Is Full of Suffering

We want to know what might make it difficult to affirm recurring lives.[6] Let us start by considering the stance that Nietzsche opposes: pessimism. We can define pessimism as the claim that the bad in life inevitably and invariably outweighs the good. Schopenhauer argues for a particular version of pessimism, in which he both identifies goodness with the absence of suffering and argues that facts about the nature of willing guarantee that suffering is omnipresent and inescapable (Schopenhauer 1969: 319–363). Although Schopenhauer inaugurates these debates, they continue beyond him. The clash between Pessimists and their opponents, the Optimists, is one of the dominant intellectual movements from the 1860s onward, continuing through Eugen Dühring, Eduard von Hartmann, Philipp Mainländer, Julius Bahnsen, and others.[7]

It is uncontroversial that Nietzsche is gripped by the Pessimism debates. And there is an obvious connection between the Pessimism debates and eternal recurrence: eternal recurrence, like the Pessimism debates, is concerned with whether an unprejudiced view of life leads us to despair. This has led some readers to think that eternal recurrence is responsive to Schopenhauer's concerns about suffering.[8] But this is too quick. If Nietzsche were merely concerned with Schopenhauer's problem, then eternal recurrence would do no additional work. If someone already accepts the idea that the pains of life necessarily outweigh the pleasures, then eternal recurrence would not matter. Schopenhauer, for example, thinks that even the prospect of living life *once* is sufficient to motivate pessimism, once we see what living actually involves. So the person who

[6] An interpretive note: many commentators assume, often without argument, that what renders eternal recurrence difficult are facts about the agent's own past. I find it very strange that this assumption has gripped the literature (it is present most explicitly in Nehamas 1985 and Anderson 2005, but it is quite widespread). In *Z*, Zarathustra evinces no concern whatsoever with *his own* past; what he finds troubling is more general features of his world, specifically the presence of the "small man" or the "rabble" (*Z*:III "Convalescent"; *Z*:III "Redemption"). So, while it has become standard to present eternal recurrence as if Nietzsche wanted us to focus on our own pasts and our own choices, that assumption is not warranted by the texts.

[7] Beiser 2016 provides a helpful introduction to these figures. For Nietzsche's discussions of pessimism, see for example *WS* 184; *D* 354, 561; *GS* 48, 56, 134, 312, 313, 318, 326.

[8] See Reginster 2006 and Janaway 2007.

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accepts Schopenhauer's arguments will *already* have the pessimistic reaction to life, independently of the eternal recurrence.

And the reverse also seems true: if you have reconciled yourself to life despite the pervasiveness of suffering, then eternal recurrence should not bother you. If suffering is not an objection to living once, it should not be an objection to living twice, five times, or an infinite number of times. After all, while the total amount of suffering would be increased as lives are multiplied, the ratio of suffering to whatever one sees as redeeming suffering would remain constant. Being content with a singular life despite suffering while rejecting a repeating life because of the very same suffering would be incoherent; it would be involve treating the very same thing in opposite ways depending exclusively on the number of times it occurs.[9]

Of course, another form of pessimism is manifest in what Nietzsche likes to call "the wisdom of Silenus": that the best thing is never to have been born, and the second best is to die soon (*BT* 3). It is possible to read eternal recurrence as expressing the inescapability of life: the second best option, that of dying soon, is not available, because your life will repeat eternally. There is no escape from the cycle of death and rebirth, no escape from willing. Perhaps eternal recurrence is supposed to target this thought. But, aside from the fact that this is a fairly obvious point and thus hard to square with Nietzsche's claims about the novelty of eternal recurrence, it does not generate any additional problem for recurring lives. Someone who is satisfied with a singular life is not going to be trying to escape from that life; someone who rejects a singular life already is. So eternal recurrence, interpreted merely as claiming that we cannot escape from life, would be of limited import and limited originality.[10]

Thus, we face a problem: this interpretation cannot fulfill the interpretive criterion. The alleged fact that suffering outweighs happiness is no more of a problem for a repeating life than for a singular life. Affirming eternal recurrence despite suffering should be no more difficult than affirming a singular life despite suffering.

3.3 Affirmation Is Difficult Because Everything Is Interconnected

Let us consider a more complex reading: Alexander Nehamas' influential interpretation of eternal recurrence. Notice that when eternal recurrence is discussed in *Zarathustra*, the interconnectedness of events is emphasized:

[9] Soll 1973 also makes this point. For an argument against it, see Loeb 2018.

[10] Compare Jenkins (2020: 30), who also emphasizes that this kind of thought is unoriginal and cannot be the content of eternal recurrence.

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> Have you ever said Yes to a single joy? O my friends, then you said Yes to *all* woe. All things are entangled, ensnared, enamored; if you ever wanted one thing twice, if you ever said, 'You please me, happiness! Abide, moment!' then you wanted *all* back. All anew, all eternally, all entangled, ensnared, enamored — oh, then you *loved* the world. (*Z*:IV "Sleepwalker's Song"; see also *Z*:III "Vision and Riddle" and *EH* BT:2)

Drawing on passages on this type, Nehamas argues that Nietzsche rejects the distinction between accidental and essential properties. Instead, he accepts a view that we can call (following Anderson 2005) inverse superessentialism: every property is equally essential to who you are. If this is right, then any change in a person's life would result in a new person.

Nehamas thinks that Nietzsche's eternal recurrence presupposes this metaphysical thesis. Nietzsche asks us to consider reliving just this life, with no detail changed, because reliving any other life would not count as reliving one's own life. As Nehamas puts it, "If my life were to recur, then it could recur only in identical fashion" (Nehamas 1985: 153). So, if we are to affirm our lives, we have to affirm our lives with no details changed. That is the problem that eternal recurrence poses.

I am skeptical that Nietzsche actually endorses inverse superessentialism, but let us set that aside.[11] I want to focus on a simpler point: if Nietzsche were interested in the difficulty of affirming life given the interconnectedness of events, then eternal recurrence would be unnecessary. Suppose Nehamas is correct in claiming that Nietzsche accepts inverse superessentialism. And suppose I hesitate to affirm X (say, my life) because X is connected to Y (say, a past misfortune). Whether X and Y repeat (and especially whether they repeat eternally) is irrelevant. Any difficulties generated by Nehamas' version of eternal recurrence are generated not by the idea of eternal repetition, but by inverse superessentialism. The point about interconnectedness is doing all the work. Eternal recurrence adds nothing.

So we could imagine a demon appearing on the shoulder of some superficial optimist and saying: your life as you live it depends, for its particularities, on all the horrors of history, on the Holocaust and on disease and massacre and war and death. If you are genuinely affirmative

[11] Why be skeptical of this? Simply put, the passages that suggest inverse superessentialism can be read more modestly: Nietzsche seems to me to be emphasizing that (1) events are interconnected in complex and unexpected ways, and that (2) in light of this certain ways of drawing the distinction between accidental and essential properties are untenable. But you can endorse those points without committing yourself to the much stronger claim that (3) all distinctions between essential and accidental properties are equally arbitrary.

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toward your life, you also have to affirm all of *that*. Can you do it?[12] No doubt this is a difficult question. But it has nothing to do with infinite or eternal repetition. It does not help us to understand the question that eternal recurrence poses.

So the interconnectedness of events does not generate a special problem for recurring lives, as compared to singular lives. It does not make affirming repeating lives any more difficult than affirming a singular life.

3.4 Affirmation Is Difficult Because We Crave Permanence

Bernard Reginster claims that eternal recurrence is difficult because accepting it "requires a revaluation of values" (Reginster 2006: 219). In particular, it requires that change the way in which we evaluate "being" and "becoming." Reginster argues that many philosophers have valued being or permanence over becoming. He writes:

> In objecting to the aspiration for the eternal life, which is characteristic of Christianity but is also shared by a great many philosophers since Plato, Nietzsche is in fact objecting to their valuation of permanence, or "being," and their corresponding devaluation of "becoming": "Death, change, age, as well as procreation and growth, are for them objections refutations even. What is, does not become; what becomes, is not . . . Now they all believe, even to the point of despair, in that which is" (*TI* "Reason" 1; *GM* III:28). (Reginster 2006: 224)

So Reginster's claim is that many philosophers devalue "becoming" and value "being" or "permanence." If we envision our lives eternally repeating, we envision a world in which nothing can be attained once and for all. Any attained ends are undone; time repeats. Permanence is impossible. Insofar as we continue to value permanence, eternal recurrence will therefore be troubling. Insofar as we value becoming, eternal recurrence need not be troubling. Eternal recurrence thus plays a role in revaluation: if we were committed to values that require permanence, we would need to shift to values compatible with transience. As Reginster puts it, "to live in accordance with the eternal recurrence requires a revaluation of the condemnation of becoming" (Reginster 2006: 226).

While Reginster's claims are intriguing, this interpretation faces difficulties. Firstly, as Soll (1973) points out, the notion of eternal recurrence *is* compatible with a type of permanence – indeed, it is compatible with the

[12] This is, more or less, the question in Wallace 2013.

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only type of permanence most of us actually care about. Let me illustrate this with an example. Suppose a scientist is struggling to develop a vaccine to a dangerous disease. She is making progress and hopes to have a successful treatment in a few years, thereby savings thousands of lives. But then you tell her: your attainment will not be permanent; time will revert, the disease will recur. Why should that matter? It will not change the fact that thousands will be saved during her actual lifetime. I think this is the only form of permanence most of us desire: not permanence in the sense of unending, eternal stasis, but permanence in the sense of something's lasting for a reasonable amount of time. If you told the scientist that the world would be destroyed a day after her discovery of the vaccine, then the pursuit of the vaccine would look senseless; if you told her the world would be destroyed a hundred years afterwards, its pursuit would be sensible.

Secondly, Reginster seems to me to underestimate the number of values that are compatible with the idea of becoming. Reginster claims that "a paradigmatic manifestation" of the values that would be compatible with eternal recurrence is "creative activity" (Reginster 2006: 226). He argues that the creative individual continuously seeks to establish and then overcome particular goals, never merely abiding in her particular goals or states of accomplishment, and thus being committed to unending becoming (Reginster 2006: 226ff). But is creative activity really so distinctive? Here are some valued activities that do not seem to depend on permanence: experiencing sensual pleasures, such as the pleasures of eating or having sex; listening to music; reading a novel; going for a nice walk; playing a game of basketball; going for a swim; taking a vacation; spending time with one's family and friends. None of those seem to depend on permanence, and yet these are the very activities and goals that most of us see as infusing our lives with value. And even if we focus on activities that more directly aim at some lasting accomplishment, it is not clear that we typically care about the permanence of that accomplishment. Picture the philosopher who spends years writing a book on some topic. It would be laughable if the philosopher thought his book would be read for all eternity, or would have an effect that lasted for all eternity. Most of us are perfectly content to have our writings read by a few contemporaries; we are under no illusions that we will attain more than that, and yet the activities still seem meaningful.

In light of these points, let us consider an individual who affirms his own singular life on the basis of these perfectly ordinary values. Will such an individual be troubled by the thought of his attainments being undone?

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It is not at all clear to me that he would. If he genuinely wanted permanence, eternal recurrence would be dispiriting; but I have suggested that most of us do not want that kind of permanence. Insofar as ordinary values seem sufficient to underwrite the affirmation of a singular life, no additional difficulties would be generated by thoughts of recurring lives.

3.5 Affirmation Is Difficult Because We Are Vengeful

Scott Jenkins reads eternal recurrence as Nietzsche's attempt to "think pessimism through to its depths" (*BGE* 56). According to Jenkins, this means that Nietzsche wants to discover "the features of human psychology that either *produce* or dispose one to *accept* pessimistic worldviews" (Jenkins 2020: 24–25). And Jenkins notes that "Nietzsche consistently identifies a single need lurking behind a pessimistic valuation of existence – the need for *revenge*" (Jenkins 2020: 25).

If this is right, then eternal recurrence must be connected to vengefulness (that is, the need for revenge). But what, exactly, is the connection? Jenkins claims that vengefulness "is an orientation *within time*, and in particular, *toward the past*. Intuitively, a vengeful person is preoccupied or even obsessed with the past" (Jenkins 2020: 26). Vengefulness is backward-looking: it concerns past harms, dwelling on them again and again (see also *Z:*II "Tarantulas"; *Z:*II "Redemption"; and *Z:*III "Tablets").

Suppose a vengeful person tries to cultivate an affirmative attitude toward life. In being vengeful, he will see some past harm as highly objectionable. But, as we all know, there are ways of remaining affirmative despite this. For example, we can see the future as compensating us for these past harms: yes, the past was bad, but the future is bright. Imagine an individual of that form. He sees life as affirmable because and to the extent that life compensates him for past harms. Then we confront him with the thought of eternal recurrence. He will need to experience those past harms again and again. This could be traumatic, leading to despair. A non-vengeful person, by contrast, need not in the same way be bothered by the thought of the past's return.

I think this reading comes close to the truth, but is not quite right. Here is the key problem: it is not true that "revenge is completely backwards-looking" (Jenkins 2020: 7). Perhaps some people seek revenge in order to escape from, suppress, or compensate for past harms. But others – indeed, the very people for whom the term "vengeful" seems most accurate – are devoted to bringing about future harms to the offending object or person. Vengefulness manifests as a desire to harm, to detract. This need not be

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actualized; it can be mere fantasy (see also *GM* I:10–11). But it does generate an orientation toward an imagined future. So Jenkins is right that the vengeful person broods, dwells, and in that sense orients himself toward the past; but he neglects the fact that just as essential is an orientation toward the future, in which the vengeful person seeks to retaliate against his object. Max Scheler, in his analysis of Nietzschean *ressentiment*, offers what seems to me an accurate description of the vindictive or vengeful person:

> The vindictive person is instinctively and without a conscious act of volition drawn toward events which may give rise to vengefulness, or he tends to see injurious intentions in all kinds of perfectly innocent actions and remarks of others. Great touchiness is indeed frequently a symptom of a vengeful character. The vindictive person is always in search of objects, and in fact he attacks in the belief that he is simply wreaking vengeance. This vengeance restores his damaged feeling of personal value, his injured "honor," or it brings "satisfaction" for the wrongs he has endured. (Scheler 1994: 32)

The vengeful person, so described, could *welcome* eternal recurrence. After all, the repetition will bring ever more opportunities for harming and disparaging the rejected object. Let us call this *diabolical* vengefulness.[13]

Diabolical vengefulness is a complex psychological state: one wants to damage or destroy the resented object, and in that sense wants to be rid of it; but one also *needs* the resented object, in order to react against it. While this state is complex, I think it is perfectly ordinary. As Nietzsche points out in the *Genealogy* and elsewhere, psychological complexes of this form are common, perhaps ubiquitous. We are often attracted to that which we condemn: the ascetic priest seeks the very dominance that he consciously disparages; the sufferer thirsts after the very suffering that he wants to escape; "people no longer protested *against* pain, they *thirsted* after pain; '*more* pain! *more* pain!' thus cried the longing of his disciples and initiates for centuries" (*GM* III:20). In analogous fashion, the diabolically vengeful person wants both to destroy and to preserve the object of his vengeance: he needs an "opposite, external world" in order to express his vengeful values (*GM* I:10). (Again, this can take the form of fantasy or imaginative reaction, as in the discussion of the diabolical revenge fantasies of Tertullian and Aquinas in *GM* I:15.)

Jenkins sees eternal recurrence as designed to distinguish the vengeful person from the life-affirmer. But if the diabolically vengeful person can

[13] Thanks to Mark Migotti for suggesting the term diabolical.

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crave eternal recurrence, then Jenkins cannot be right. It cannot be vengefulness as such that is at issue. I want to suggest that the problem posed by recurrence is much simpler: whether one can bear the return of the detested object. I will expand this point in the next section.

3.6 What Makes Affirmation Difficult Is the Desire to Eliminate Certain Aspects of Life

Let us take a step back. Consider an individual who seems to affirm his actual life, but despairs when confronted with the thought of recurring lives. Anyone who affirms life will have some basis for that affirmation, something in life that they take to render it affirmable. This might be a value, an ideal, a goal. For an individual with a vengeful ideal, we would have this structure:

I affirm life on the basis of A.
I value A because it negates B.
Eternal recurrence presents me with the prospect of B's continual return.

Let us think about that third step. Suppose I *welcome* the opportunity to negate, again and again, the rejected object B. For example, suppose I am a resentful priest in the Roman era who sees the collapse of archaic warrior morality. My primary focus is on harming my enemy, the noble. Insofar as I relish the harming of the noble, I could welcome the continuous return of the noble: after all, the continuous return of the resented object gives me something to damage, to destroy.

This points to an ambiguity in the notion of revenge or reactivity. We can distinguish:

The desire for revenge on X, which takes the form of desiring to *harm* X.
The desire to eliminate X, which takes the form of desiring *that X not exist*.

The desire for revenge, so construed, is not problematized by eternal recurrence. The person who desires revenge in this sense can welcome the prospect of eternal recurrence. But the desire for elimination, construed in the second sense, *is* problematized by eternal recurrence. Insofar as the rejected object's existence is seen as intolerable, eternal recurrence will be intolerable; for it will entail that the rejected object cannot be eliminated. It continuously returns.

Let us now relate this to our original question. What eternal recurrence seems to be revealing is not simple reactivity or vengefulness but

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something more profound: the inability to sustain affirmation of life so long as life contains certain features, events, or things. With a singular life, one can envision the rejected object being eliminated once and for all. With repeated lives, the rejected object keeps returning, and is never truly gone. Thus, what is being revealed is whether the person's affirmation of life is conditional on life's being purified of the rejected object.

Let us call this *conditional affirmation*, and define it as follows:

> Conditional affirmation: I affirm life on the condition that an aspect or feature of life can be eliminated.
>
> Unconditional affirmation: I affirm life just as it is.

We can relate these notions to the plot of *Zarathustra*. Consider: initially, Zarathustra wants to rid existence of the rabble. He cannot bear that thought that life contains the rabble: "Life is a well of joy; but where the rabble drinks too, are wells are poisoned" (*Z*:II "Rabble"). He describes himself as "gagging" on the rabble:

> The bite on which I gagged the most is not the knowledge that life itself requires hostility and death and torture crosses but once I asked, and I was almost choked by the question: What? does life require even the rabble? Are poisoned wells required, and stinking fires and soiled dreams and maggots in the bread of life? (*Z*:II "Rabble")

And he repeatedly returns to this theme: "the great disgust with man – *this* choked me and crawled into my throat" (*Z*:III "Convalescent").

So how does Zarathustra manage to affirm life? By isolating himself from the rabble:

> verily, I had to fly to the highest spheres that I might find the fount of pleasure again. Oh I found it, my brothers! Here, in the highest spheres, the fount of pleasure wells up from me! And here is a life of which the rabble does not drink. (*Z*:II "Rabble")

Zarathustra affirms life by isolating himself from the rabble and fantasizing about a future in which the rabble has been eliminated; indeed, he admires those who "do not know how to live" without seeing themselves as a bridge to something future, in which the present has "gone under," presumably never to return (*Z*:I "Prologue"). And this carries him along well enough; he takes himself to be affirmative, to love life (*Z*:I "Prologue"). But then he encounters the Soothsayer, who tells him that "All is empty, all is the same, all has been!" (*Z*:II "Soothsayer"). Nothing is fundamentally new; we just get more of the same, over and over. And this leads into Zarathustra's discussion of eternal recurrence, in

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which he envisions the continuous return of the rejected object. He "chokes" on it, chokes on his knowledge that the rabble will return (*Z*:III "Convalescent"). His initial affirmation of life is revealed to be conditional: he can affirm life only insofar as it is purged of the rabble. (Though I will not argue for that here, I believe Part III shows Zarathustra recognizing the conditionality of his affirmation and struggling to render it unconditional; he finally succeeds in *Z*:III "Seven Seals".)

Nietzsche makes analogous points about other approaches to life. In *BT*, for example, we are told that the Dionysian stance involves affirming life conditional upon the purported recognition of a mystical primal unity (*BT* 3; *BT* 7–8); and that the Socratic stance portrays the pursuit of wisdom as redeeming life conditional upon its having the capacity to mitigate or even eliminate suffering, an assumption that Nietzsche presents Socrates himself as seeing through (*BT* 12–18). In both cases, the affirmation is conditional: on the possibility of individuality being eliminated; on the possibility of suffering and unreason being removed.

If we employ this distinction between conditional and unconditional affirmation, we can see why affirming a singular life would be easier than affirming a recurring life. A singular life can be seen as purified of the objectionable elements. Or, absent that, the purification can at least be seen as underway: one envisions a future in which the objectionable element has been eradicated. A recurring life blocks this possibility. The objectionable element will return, endlessly.

Thus, if your affirmation of life is conditional, the thought of eternal recurrence will undermine this affirmation. It will be more difficult to affirm eternal recurrence than to affirm a singular life: conditional affirmation is sufficient for affirming a singular life, but not recurring lives.

Moreover, this can make the thought of eternal recurrence useful for diagnostic purposes. Take someone who affirms singular life, and ask her if she can affirm eternal recurrence. If she despairs, this is an indication that her affirmation was conditional.

But, one might argue, doesn't this require that we treat eternal recurrence as a true description of the universe? Doesn't it require us to assume that life actually recurs?[14] After all, suppose I can only affirm life conditionally. Then my affirmation of life is dependent upon the assumption that some feature – let us say, dire poverty – can be eliminated. And suppose further that it is *not* true that the past recurs. Then my affirmation of life is conditional, but this might seem unproblematic: I affirm the

[14] Karl Löwith (1997) and Bernd Magnus (1978) address this point.

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actual world, in which dire poverty *can* be eliminated once and for all; I just would not be able to affirm a different world, in which life and hence dire poverty recurred. In short: conditional affirmation is not problematic if the condition can be met!

But this objection misses its mark. Contemplating a counterfactual scenario can reveal deficiencies in one's relation to an actual scenario. Consider an example: Suppose I ask you whether your relationship with your partner would continue in the same fashion were your partner to suffer a debilitating illness, such as Alzheimer's. And suppose that in the actual world that will never be the case: you and your partner will enjoy good health to the end of your days. Nonetheless, we can distinguish two people: one of whom says "of course! I'd continue to love her, continue to relate to her in just the same way," and another of whom says "I'm not sure. I don't think I'd be able to go on with her." Assuming that these statements are sincere and accurate, they pick out different ways of relating to one's relationship: the former embodies a fuller, more complete form of commitment than the latter. And this is true regardless of the fact that the counterfactual scenario will never occur.

Just so with eternal recurrence: even if we stipulate that actual life does not recur, the way in which one relates to the prospect of life's repetition can reveal provisionality, deficiency, or incompleteness in one's relation to life. In short: eternal recurrence can be *false* as a description of the actual world, and yet our reaction to it can still reveal crucial information about our relation to the actual world.

With that in mind, let us relate my interpretation of eternal recurrence to some of the previous interpretations. Consider: Reginster is correct to think that eternal recurrence has something to do with permanence. But the question is not whether our values presuppose permanence; few of them do. The question is whether our affirmation of life is conditional on the possibility of eliminating detested features of life. When we contemplate eternal recurrence, we envision the detested object being a permanent, ineliminable feature of life. But what generates the problem is not the temporality of the value or the detested object (i.e., whether it is transient or permanent); what generates the problem is the fact that the agent's affirmation is conditional upon the possibility of eliminating the detested object. So eternal recurrence does not problematize the *temporality* of values but the *logical structure* of values.

Jenkins is correct to think that eternal recurrence is connected to something like vengefulness or reactivity. But this is not the full story, because some forms of vengefulness are compatible with eternal

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recurrence. Indeed, vengefulness in its purest form would desire the return of the resented object, in order to negate it all the more. What eternal recurrence brings to light is something more than vengefulness: the desire to purge existence of certain elements. And what it reveals is not so much an orientation toward the past as a defective relation to the present. Eternal recurrence is concerned neither with what has happened nor with what will happen but with what is happening.[15]

3.7 Conditional Affirmation and Higher Values

I want to close by tying some points together. I have argued that the question of whether we affirm a singular life cannot easily distinguish between a case of conditional and unconditional affirmation, whereas contemplating recurring lives brings this distinction to the fore. The function of eternal recurrence, then, is to diagnose the nature of one's affirmation, revealing it to be either conditional or unconditional. One potential worry about this interpretation is that it is fairly simple: it does not involve abstruse metaphysical theses about interconnectedness, profound revaluations of being and becoming, or complex analyses of temporality. So why would Nietzsche think this distinction was so important? Why present it as his most profound philosophical insight?

To answer this question, we need to take a step back. Recall that Nietzsche repeatedly claims that we can reconcile ourselves to existence only by accepting some evaluative framework that renders existence sensible. As he puts it in the *Gay Science*, we need an interpretation that can "promote the life of the species, by promoting the faith in life. "Life is worth living," every one of them shouts, 'there is something to life, there is something behind life, beneath it; beware!'" (*GS* 1). This is the central theme in *BT*, *GS*, *Z*, and *GM*, and is also discussed in most of Nietzsche's other texts. The "Why?" must find some answer: "life ought to be loved, because—!" (*GS* 1). Absent an answer to that question – absent a way of filling in the blank –we suffer: "[Man] did not know how to justify, explain, affirm himself: he suffered from the problem of his meaning" (*GM* III:28).

[15] I do not mean to suggest that Zarathustra is completely unconcerned with the past. In "On Redemption" and elsewhere, Nietzsche considers ways in which will to power and eternal recurrence might connect to certain ways of relating to the past. I lack the space to address these points here. Instead, I am making a more limited point: vengefulness is not simply an orientation toward the past (Sections 3.5 and 3.6); and Zarathustra is not simply concerned with events in *his own* past (Section 3.2).

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What makes existence sensible, according to Nietzsche, is some religion, morality, ideal, or, more generally, some vision of human life (*GS* 1). Just to have a neutral term to describe these things, let us call them *evaluative perspectives*. We are given examples: Christianity; Renaissance humanism; Socratism; Greek tragedy; the Homeric warrior ethic; and Nietzsche's will-to-power centered perspective. In each of these, we have some vision of the good life, some vision of what makes life worth living.

Some of these evaluative perspectives explicitly reject life, as in Schopenhauer or the Christian ascetic. Others can seem more affirmative but are, Nietzsche thinks, in the process of collapsing: here he cites the Socratic perspective or the prioritization of truth (*BT*, *GM* III). The evaluative perspective offered by Zarathustra initially seems different. It is supposedly fully affirmative; Zarathustra loves life and will teach us how to do so as well (*Z*:I "Prologue"). But problems with his ideals emerge.

First, Zarathustra's initial ideals have the same *structure* as the Christian and Socratic goals: they see the present as imperfect, as in need of redemption by some future goal.[16] Man must be redeemed by the overman; a better world lies hidden beyond this one, if only we can serve as bridges to it (*Z*:I "Prologue"). Zarathustra's ideals thus deprecate the present by relating it to a putatively more valuable future: "The now and the past on earth – alas, my friends, that is what *I* find most unendurable; and I should not know how to live if I were not also a seer of that which must come" (*Z*:II "On Redemption"). So already there is a temptation to live for the sake of the future, to *bear* life in the hopes of changing it. Although this does not logically necessitate the condemnation of actual life, it does make it very tempting to think that actual life needs to be purified of objectionable elements in order to be affirmed.

Second, and relatedly, Zarathustra's ideals may be motivated – either at their outset or as they continue to manifest over time – by resentment or reactivity. What is primarily focused upon is getting rid of what is actual, in favor of some putative and rather hazily described future. This is why Zarathustra repeatedly "chokes" on his "great disgust with man" (*Z*:III "Vision and Riddle"); it is why the Soothsayer, who says that there is never anything new and there can be no escape from the past, terrifies Zarathustra (*Z*:II "Soothsayer"); it is why Zarathustra attempts to suppress the past, keeping it encased behind iron gates and glass coffins (*Z*:II "Soothsayer"). Regardless of how Zarathustra's ideas originate – and if Zarathustra is right they originate out of an active, joyous, creative "yes-

[16] See Clark (1990: 273–277) and Anderson (2009).

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saying" – the focus, as these goals are lived, is increasingly on what is rejected, rather than what is sought.

What would be best, by Nietzsche's lights, is to have some evaluative perspective that placed full value in the present, allowing it to be affirmed unconditionally.[17] But this introduces a new problem. Let me explain.

At the beginning of this essay, I noted that an ordinary person devoted to ordinary goals, a person who contents himself with everyday life, needn't have much trouble with eternal recurrence: most of us will find that mundane pursuits infuse our lives with enough value to make our lives worth affirming. I think Nietzsche is aware of this. His "last men" are those who embrace simple pleasures and ordinary pursuits, who are indeed incapable even of understanding why one would pursue great, difficult, challenging goals. They lack any ideals that might inspire devotion, commitment, achievement. Any ideal that requires "exertion" is derided: pursuing such ideals is madness, and the last man tells us that "formerly all the world was mad" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 5).

The last men would view the eternal recurrence in the same way they view everything else: as a mild diversion that provokes no great troubles. And, as I pointed out in Section 3.1, this is just the reaction that eternal recurrence tends to provoke in our contemporaries. But suppose we focus not on the last men but on those striving for something more. Elsewhere, I have argued that the distinguishing feature of the last men is that their evaluative perspective lacks *higher values*. A large part of what disgusts Zarathustra about the last men and the rabble is the absence of higher values.[18] Higher values are overriding, incontestable, and resistant to critical scrutiny. In addition, they confer a sense of meaning or significance on the activities that they regulate. Socrates' higher value is something like understanding or truth; Zarathustra's is, at the outset, the overman. In each case there is a difficult goal to be striven for, something that can confer meaning on the activities it regulates. So in both *GS* and *Z* we have individuals who espouse higher values and are beginning to recognize ways in which they are problematic.

Suppose eternal recurrence is meant to address those whose evaluative perspectives include higher values. People with higher values differ from the last men in that they see striving for great tasks as worthwhile,

[17] See Richardson (2020); Chapter 9.

[18] "'What is love? What is creation? What is longing? What is a star?' thus asks the last man, and he blinks" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 5; see also *Z*:I "Prologue" 3). The descriptions of the last men consistently emphasize their inability to understand the pursuit of great, challenging goals, the very sorts of goals that higher values underwrite. See Katsafanas (2015) for a discussion of this point. Relevant passages include *GS* 1; *BGE* 263; *Z* Prologue; *KSA* 12:1[22]; *KSA* 12:10[95]; and *KSA* 13:11[100].

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meaningful, or meritorious. They embrace goals that mandate devotion, compliance, and sacrifice of competing goods. They endorse the values of achievement and growth, the values that Nietzsche associates with the manifestation of will to power (see Katsafanas 2013a; 2013b).

When confronted with eternal recurrence, those with higher values face a deep and difficult problem. Can we be unconditionally affirmative while still harboring higher values? This is very hard. The focus on some valued goal that is not yet attained tends to lead us into a devaluation of the present, as we see in *Zarathustra*: because the value of the present activities is seen as lying in some future state, the present tends to be experienced as deficient relative to the imagined future. If the attainment of the future goal is the source of the present's value, then the value of the present seems to seep into the future; the present is denuded, and life is lived for the sake of the conjectural future. Schopenhauer makes this point in a lovely passage from his *Parerga and Paralipomena*:

> We look upon the present as something to be put up with while it lasts, and serving only as the way towards our goal. Hence most people, if they glance back when they come to the end of life, will find that all along they have been living *ad interim*: they will be surprised to find that the very thing they disregarded and let slip by unenjoyed, was just the life in the expectation of which they passed all their time. (Schopenhauer 1851, Section 145)

Schopenhauer is not making a point about the contents of particular values or goals; he is not claiming that *some* pursuits lead us to a devaluation of the present, whereas others might not. He is making a deeper and perfectly general point: that the very *having of a goal* etiolates the present, drawing our attention to the future; and more so, to the extent that the goal is invested with great import. Our orientation toward goals displaces our interest into the future; we lose *life as it is lived*, in favor of an imagined future, so that the present is experientially barren and evaluatively deficient. And the greater the distance between the ideal and the actual, the greater the danger that this will occur. That is why higher values pose such a challenge.

Something like this, I suggest, worries Nietzsche. He does not follow Schopenhauer in thinking that the process described above is inevitable or inescapable (much of Nietzsche's work is designed to provide an alternative account of the relation between valuing, willing, and temporality).[19] But he does agree with Schopenhauer that it is a real danger. Indeed, we

[19] See in particular his reflections on will to power, discussed in Katsafanas (2013a). Put simply, Nietzsche thinks that rather than adopting means for the sake of ends, we sometimes adopt ends for the sake of the challenges that their means afford.

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can see the tension embodied in Nietzsche's own life. Nietzsche wants to be "only a yes-sayer" (*GS* 276), and yet anyone who reads his polemics and critiques can see how tenuous his grip on that aspiration is. The danger is not just that his higher values will turn out to be reactive: the danger is that even values which start out as fully affirmative, fully active, can be deformed into their opposites.[20] This movement is on display in *Zarathustra*. I think *Zarathustra* has the familiar structure of a *Bildungsroman*, with the early parts showing Zarathustra succumbing to various misunderstandings and errors, the middle parts portraying Zarathustra's realization that his putatively affirmative ideals are expressions of reactive stances, and the later parts showing him restructuring his task in order to overcome these mistakes.[21] But regardless of whether this is true of *Zarathustra*, it is clear that Nietzsche is interested, throughout his career, in teasing out the underlying structure of ideals, showing that apparently condemnatory ideals also express an attachment to life (*GM* III), or that apparently affirmative ideals also express a condemnation of life (*GS* 340, *GM* III). For Nietzsche is not only interested in the content of our ideals. He is also interested – arguably *more* interested – in what sustains our commitment to those ideals. What the eternal recurrence can reveal, and what the contemplation of a singular life occludes, is the deformation of an affirmative ideal into its opposite. Or, perhaps put in terms of a problem: it can suggest that any attempt to manifest an

[20] And, conversely, condemnatory ideals can be transformed into affirmative ones. It is also worth noting that these are extremes. In addition to ideals being transformed into their opposites, there will be cases in which ideals come to be mixed or contaminated with contrary elements: an ideal that is originally purely affirmative will come to incorporate reactive or condemnatory elements, without sliding all the way into total negation. See especially *BGE* 224.

[21] In *BGE* Nietzsche claims that his higher individual *needs* the rabble. The higher individual requires a form of social hierarchy; in order for this hierarchy to exist, some people need to be at the bottom (*BGE* 257–260). So, in endorsing a form of hierarchy and the establishment of a "pathos of distance," Nietzsche cannot endorse the elimination of the rabble. Arguably this points to a difference between Nietzsche's ideals and the ideals that Zarathustra originally endorses: whereas Nietzsche wills even the existence of the rabble, Zarathustra, in preaching the overman, originally falls short of this. So Zarathustra must overcome his own disgust at the rabble, his own reactive attitudes, in part by coming to see the rabble as a necessary constituent of the ideal that he affirms. And, although I lack the space to develop this point, this relates to the role of the overman concept in *Z*. Some commentators argue that the notion of the overman is progressively abandoned as *Z* unfolds (e.g., Lampert 1986); others disagree, thinking that Zarathustra maintains his commitment to that notion (e.g., Loeb 2010). I think Ansell-Pearson (1992) is right to distinguish two different ways in which the overman can be understood: the overman as a fundamentally new, redemptive, transfigured humanity (which I take Zarathustra to endorse early in *Z* and reject later in *Z*) and the overman as an image of the person who bears an unconditionally affirmative attitude toward life (which is the picture that emerges in *Z* III). In short: Zarathustra abandons one notion of the overman and replaces it with another.

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unconditionally affirmative ideal will be beset by tensions, perennially tempting the adherent to negate what is actual in favor of what is ideal; and the more so, to the extent that the ideal takes the form of a higher value. The question, for Nietzsche, is whether we can cleave to an ideal while simultaneously affirming a world in which that ideal is everywhere and always absent.[22] To do so would be the purest form of affirmation.[23]

[22] Reginster (2006) points out that Nietzsche associates one form of nihilism with the commitment to unrealizable ideals. We should be careful to distinguish unrealizability in Reginster's sense from the type of commitment I am discussing above. Certain ideals are unrealizable because they have false presuppositions. For example, Nietzsche takes otherworldly ideals to be unrealizable, for the simple reason that there is no sense to be given to the notion of the otherworldly. Eternal recurrence, as I am interpreting it, does not focus on *that* kind of unrealizability. It instead confronts us with the thought that any goal, even if it is realized, will be undone. Nothing is realizable *once and for all*. But this is different from nothing being realizable *at all*. So the type of unrealizability with which eternal recurrence confronts us is not the same as the type of unrealizability that Nietzsche associates with nihilism. (Though compare *KSA* 12:5[71], which suggests that eternal recurrence can be "the most extreme form of nihilism"; it can drive home the thought that existence is "without meaning or goal" and thereby deprive us of traditional forms of protection "from despair.")

[23] For helpful comments on this paper, thanks to Keith Ansell-Pearson, Paul Loeb, Kaitlyn Creasy, Justin Remhof, Allison Merrick, Alexander Prescott-Couch, Mark Migotti, Tsarina Doyle, Andrew Huddleston, Rebecca Bamford, Ian Dunkle, Matthew Meyer, Richard Elliott, and the participants at the session on "Nietzsche, Nihilism, and Life-Affirmation" at the 2019 meeting of the Society for Phenomenology and Existential Philosophy.

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CHAPTER 4

Zarathustra's Response to Schopenhauer

Christopher Janaway

4.1 Introduction

If Arthur Schopenhauer had been blessed (or, as he might say, cursed) with an exceptionally long life, he would have been 100 years old just as Nietzsche entered his last productive year, and could in principle have read all of Nietzsche's published works. We might imagine him intrigued by *The Birth of Tragedy*, perhaps vindicated by *Schopenhauer as Educator*, almost certainly offended by most of what came later, though at least he could be reassured that someone was continuing to read him seriously. But what would Schopenhauer have made of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*? Would he have recognized any of his doctrines, or himself, in it? My aim here is to look at the text of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* with these questions in mind.

An important recurring character in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the Soothsayer (*der Wahrsager*), who appears in Part II, speaking of a "great mournfulness come over humankind" (*Z*:II "Soothsayer"),[1] and in Part IV to tempt Zarathustra to *Mitleid* (compassion or pity) for the higher humans.[2] It has become conventional to regard the Soothsayer as representing Schopenhauer.[3] However, in what follows I challenge this orthodoxy. Firstly, I show that it is at best over-simple to identify the Soothsayer with Schopenhauer. He has many roles: in his first appearance he expresses

[1] Quotations from *Z* use the translation by Parkes (*Z* 2005) unless otherwise stated. I occasionally discuss other translations and translators' notes for *Z* (1909, 1954, 1969, 2006). The following other translations are used in this chapter: *BGE* (2002); BT (1993); D (1997); EH (2005); GM (1998); *GS* (2001).

[2] See Section 4.5 for interpretations of *Mitleid*.

[3] The convention is long-standing, and sometimes asserted with bland confidence. In notes to the 1909 Thomas Common translation of *Zarathustra*, Anthony Ludovici says the Part II "Soothsayer" chapter "refers, clearly, to Schopenhauer" (*Z* 1909: 421; see also 443–444.) Graham Parkes likewise says: "The soothsayer is clearly a portrait of Nietzsche's erstwhile mentor Schopenhauer" (*Z* 2005: 304, 316). See also Hollingdale in *Z* (1969: 35, 340 n. 21); Lampert (1993: 357); Cartwright (1993: 52); Ward (2008: 52).

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a reaction to pessimism; then in Part IV, while he is said to advocate a form of pessimism, his main function is to assist Zarathustra in transcending pessimism and overcoming compassion.[4] Secondly, rather than being condensed into one character, Schopenhauer's philosophy pervades the whole. That is not surprising, given the dialogue with Schopenhauer evident in Nietzsche's other works of the early 1880s.[5] *Zarathustra* may not be "a mere collection of didactic speeches,"[6] but it contains many such speeches, and a significant subset of them constitute a precisely aimed response to Schopenhauer. Fixating on the Soothsayer figure can distract us from this fact.

In his notes Nietzsche commented that "the Soothsayer spreads black pessimism" (*KSA* 11:29[23]), and in the text the Soothsayer is "the proclaimer of the great weariness, who taught: 'All is the same, nothing is worthwhile, world is without meaning, knowing chokes'" (*Z*:IV "Cry of Need"). Given Schopenhauer's status as the spearhead of the pessimistic "school" in German philosophy,[7] and his verdict that "we should be sorry rather than glad about the existence of the world" (*WWR* 2: 591),[8] it is plausible that in this passage the Soothsayer is meant to stand for a Schopenhauerian pessimist (though, as we shall see, the slogans do not represent Schopenhauer accurately). Nietzsche clarifies that the Soothsayer in Part IV is the same figure Zarathustra encountered in the Part II chapter entitled "The Soothsayer." However, I suggest that if Nietzsche wanted the Soothsayer simply to *be* Schopenhauer, he would appear to have overlooked what he had written in that earlier section. For in Part II the Soothsayer's relation to the pessimistic teaching is significantly different – it is not *his* teaching.

[4] Kerkmann (2017: 271) argues that the Soothsayer successively represents "an observer," "the incarnation of Schopenhauer," and "the complete nihilist," who has "lived nihilism through to the end" and has it "behind him" (see *KSA* 13:11[411].3).

[5] Eighteen sections of *Daybreak* (1881) and 5 sections of *The Gay Science* (1882) discuss Schopenhauer by name. See Janaway (1998: 270–272). Discussions of *Mitleid* at *D* 133, 135, 142, 146, and *GS* 338 relate to Schopenhauer. In March 1884, Nietzsche wrote to Malwida von Meysenbug, saying "These days I leaf though Schopenhauer sometimes" (*KSB* 6: 498). The "leafing" was not just casual: Nietzsche copied out excerpts from Schopenhauer's *The World as Will and Representation* and *On the Basis of Morals*. See *KSA* 11:25[86], 25[441], 25[442], 26[78], 26[84], 26[85].

[6] Loeb (2010: 119).

[7] "Pessimism" for Nietzsche embraces the post-Schopenhauerian pessimists such as Mainländer, Bahnsen and von Hartmann, though he treats them in a far more dismissive way than he does Schopenhauer (*GS* 357). On these figures see Beiser (2016) and Plümacher (1888).

[8] Schopenhauer's published works are cited in this chapter as follows: *BM* *On the Basis of Morals* (Schopenhauer, 2009); *PP 1*, *PP 2* *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Schopenhauer 2015); *WWR 1*, *WWR 2* *The World as Will and Representation*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Schopenhauer, 2010, 2018).

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4.2 The Soothsayer in *Zarathustra* II

The Soothsayer suddenly appears for the first time in Chapter 19 of *Zarathustra* Part II. Here in full is what he says:

> " and I saw a great mournfulness [*Traurigkeit*] come over humankind. The best became weary of their works.
>
> "A teaching went forth, and a belief along with it: 'All is empty, all is the same, all has been!'
>
> "And from the hills it echoed again: 'All is empty, all is the same, all has been!'
>
> "We have indeed harvested: but why did all our fruits turn rotten and brown? What fell down to us here last night from the evil moon?
>
> "In vain was all our work; our wine has turned to poison; an evil eye has scorched our fields and hearts yellow.
>
> "Dry have we become; and should fire fall on us, we are scattered like ashes: and even fire itself we have made weary.
>
> "All our wells have dried up. And even the sea has retreated. All ground wants to tear open, but the depths do not want to devour!
>
> "'Ah, where is there yet a sea in which we can drown': thus resounds our lament echoing over shallow swamps.
>
> "Verily, we have even become too weary to die; now we are still awake and live on in burial chambers!" (*Z*:II "Soothsayer")

The Soothsayer reports a state into which human beings have fallen. They have become sad, weary, empty of joy and purpose, despairing of change for the better. The speech refers to a teaching or doctrine (*Lehre*), which says "All is empty, all is the same, all has been," and is accompanied by a belief (*Glaube*), presumably a widely held one, since its message "echoes from the hills." But note that this teaching simply "went forth [*ergieng*]" from an unspecified origin. The Soothsayer is not identified as its source; he simply reports what he sees happening when the echo is picked up by humankind. If the *Lehre* in question is meant to be Schopenhauer's philosophical pessimism, the Soothsayer in this passage is more like an observer who foresees the mournful consequences of that pessimism, and cannot find a way out of it. His stance is that of a Nietzschean type of observer – though, as with the "madman" in *Gay Science* 125, it is not Nietzsche's own final stance.[9]

[9] Pippin (2010: 47–51) characterizes the "madman's" voice as that of a persona rather than of Nietzsche himself.

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The Soothsayer does not even sound like Schopenhauer. The Soothsayer describes an unfolding process, whereas Schopenhauer's vision is static. The emphasis in the above passage is on what human beings have *become*: the verb *werden*, to become, is used five times in the passage, and everything is in the past tense. The Soothsayer is seeing the end of a process that has happened, in which human beings have implicitly lost some purpose that they had before. They worked, they had goals, they harvested, but then all *became* in vain. Schopenhauer indeed describes any human life as "an empty, sorrowful, always uncertain existence, embittered by troubles of every sort" (*WWR* 2: 366), and teaches that "absolutely nothing is worth our strivings, efforts and struggles, that all goods are null [*nichtig*] that the world is bankrupt in every way, and that life is a business that does not cover its costs" (*WWR* 2: 589) – but with an important difference. Schopenhauer does not think that human beings have *become* mournful or empty of purpose through some temporal process. Whatever character the human condition has, for Schopenhauer it has that character timelessly in the guise of a Platonic Idea. For example:

> the history of the human race, the thronging of events, the changing times, the many shapes that the form of human life takes in different countries and centuries all this is only the accidental form of appearance of the Idea [. . .] and is as alien, inessential and indifferent to the Idea itself as the figures are to the clouds that show them, the shapes of the eddies and foam are to the stream, and the images of trees and flowers are to the ice. (*WWR* 1: 205)

Schopenhauer's message is that the human condition never really changes: if there is mournfulness, it is a condition essential to existence as such, and appropriate: "The truth is: we should be miserable and we are miserable" (*WWR* 2: 593).

Thus the Soothsayer's narration is not spoken in Schopenhauer's voice, but is similar to that of the "madman" of *GS* 125, or perhaps to the train of thought in Nietzsche's later notes on "European Nihilism":[10] an implied past in which meaning was found and despair held off, and a changed present in which meaning has been lost and despair has become a terminal threat. The Soothsayer's words are called a prophecy (*Weissagung*), and Zarathustra reacts to them by becoming mournful himself, and fearful about the future ("just a little while and this long twilight will be upon us" [*Z*:II "Soothsayer"]). Once again, Schopenhauer does not prophesy a

[10] "*One* interpretation has collapsed, but because it was considered *the* interpretation, it appears as though there is no sense in existence whatsoever, as though everything is *in vain*" (*KSA* 12:5[71], translation in Ansell-Pearson and Large [2006: 386]).

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worse future for humankind, because he thinks that things are already as bad as they could be. The prophesying is Nietzsche's. More explicit support for this interpretation comes from a passage in Book Five of *The Gay Science* (*GS* 357), where, in another version of the "death of God" narrative, Nietzsche says that Schopenhauer's "honest atheism" has swept away the "Christian interpretation" that allowed Europeans to regard nature as inherently good, history as rational and purposeful, and the individual soul as on a path to salvation. All of that "is *over* now," Nietzsche declares, a thing of the past (*vorbei*). Here again a transformation has occurred that removes comforting defenses against despair. Result: "*Schopenhauer's* question immediately comes at us in a terrifying way: *Does existence have any meaning at all?*" (*GS* 357). This parallels the Soothsayer's vision, now naming Schopenhauer as the catalyst for change. The Soothsayer sees the teaching "All is empty, all is the same, all has been" as bringing a transformative mournfulness upon humanity; Nietzsche sees Schopenhauer's teaching as bringing a terrifyingly transformative question before humanity. If the *teaching* in the Soothsayer's vision is Schopenhauer's, the vision or prophecy of the resulting decline is Nietzsche's.

At the end of the "Soothsayer" section Zarathustra keeps the Soothsayer close to him as a dinner guest, and hopes to show him "a sea in which he can drown," a way out of despair. The Soothsayer and Zarathustra belong together because they represent respectively the Nietzschean diagnosis and the possibility of a (so far undisclosed) Nietzschean cure. Some commentators have recognized that the Soothsayer is a facet of Zarathustra's predicament, or of Zarathustra himself, rather than an independent philosophical voice. Robert Gooding-Williams accepts the Soothsayer "personifies Schopenhauer's voice from *within* the horizon of a distinctively Zarathustran philosophical perspective" (2001: 193–194). Jan Kerkmann identifies the two: the Soothsayer is "Zarathustra while in the embrace of nihilism," and Zarathustra is "the Soothsayer who has overcome" pessimism, in the sense of seeing it as the opportunity for the creation of new value (Kerkmann 2017: 252). This reading is strengthened by Nietzsche's repeated description of Zarathustra himself as "also a Soothsayer" (see *Z*:III "Seven Seals"; *Z*:IV "Cry of Need" (end); *Z*:IV "Superior Humans" 18; *Z*:IV "Drunken Song" 10). In fact, the Soothsayer is portrayed as having a strikingly "inward" acquaintance with Zarathustra's psyche: his despairing sadness transmits immediately and profoundly to Zarathustra, and later he uniquely divines Zarathustra's hidden attachment to *Mitleid*.[11]

[11] I am grateful to Gudrun von Tevenar for these points.

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When the Soothsayer returns in Part IV, the observer of pessimism and its author have effectively collapsed into one: he remains the prophetic "proclaimer of the great weariness," but has now become the one who *himself taught* "All is the same, nothing is worthwhile, world is without meaning, knowing chokes" (*Z*:IV "Cry of Need"). Note that the formulation of the "teaching" has now altered – and not in an authentically Schopenhauerian way. For Schopenhauer the world *has*, and *must have*, a "moral meaning": to think otherwise is the greatest perversity, as he says in *Parerga and Paralipomena*: "That the world has a mere physical but no moral significance [*Bedeutung*] is the greatest, most ruinous and fundamental error, the real perversity of the mind and . . . it is certainly that which faith has personified as the antichrist" (*PP* 2: 183–184). Nietzsche knew the passage and referred to it.[12] The meaning of the world, its *moralische Bedeutung*, is that it is to be lamented and ultimately redeemed through selfless negation of the will. So even when the Soothsayer is made the bearer of a pessimistic teaching, the teaching is not strictly Schopenhauer's.[13]

4.3 Schopenhauer and Zarathustra on Self and Will

So far, the "teaching" we have seen is a meager affair, comprising a mere eighteen words in its longest variant,[14] and we have not stopped to examine Schopenhauer's real teachings. Schopenhauer claimed that "we should be sorry rather than glad about the existence of the world; that its non-existence would be preferable to its existence; that it is something that fundamentally should not be, etc." (*WWR* 2: 591–592) But he did not simply propagate a hopeless, gloomy outlook: he had reasons for his verdict on the world, stemming from his analysis of *will*. Furthermore, for him there is redemption (*Erlösung*) through entering a state of willlessness. *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is scrupulously timeless in its dramatic setting, so Zarathustra cannot debate with Schopenhauer by name – but

[12] In a note from 1884, Nietzsche writes that "what follows on from pessimism is the doctrine of the **sense**lessness of existence [***Sinn**losigkeit des Daseins*]" (*KSA* 11:26[326]). But in *BT* "Attempt" 5, where he refers to the *Parerga* passage on "perversity of mind," Nietzsche is clearly aware that *for Schopenhauer* the world must have a moral meaning. See Janaway (2020) and Janaway (2017b).

[13] The identification of the Soothsayer with Schopenhauer is encouraged by the unwary assumption that a pessimist must think the world has no meaning. Thanks to Andrew Huddleston for bringing out this point.

[14] For different wordings of the "teaching" see *Z*:II "Soothsayer"; *Z*:III "Convalescent" 2; *Z*:IV "Cry of Need."

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this does not prevent his utterances from tracking, and challenging, Schopenhauer's accounts of will and redemption.

Will is Schopenhauer's central and most innovative concept. Will is an in-built disposition to strive, desire, and act upon drives that constitutes the essence of any human individual, and indeed of any living thing. But willing is a deleterious condition, because it opens us to suffering and brings no genuine fulfilment. *Erlösung*, redemption, is the promise of escape from this predicament. For Schopenhauer, the supreme moral agent feels a boundless compassion, and has an immediately felt insight that the well-being and suffering of all sentient beings is on a par. Such a person comes to see the will of the particular human individual as of no consequence, and at the extreme ceases to will altogether, remaining as a purely cognitive subject who gazes upon the whole world with passive equanimity. If we read *The World as Will and Representation* in linear fashion (as Nietzsche did),[15] it culminates in the question of affirmation and negation of the will to life, and the ultimate valorization of negation of will as "the only thing that can staunch and appease the impulses of the will forever . . . the only thing that can redeem the world" (*WWR* 1: 389). As Nietzsche understood it, Schopenhauer's teaching promotes an elevated, supreme selflessness that redeems the world through negation of the will. Note that this is not a state of sadness, mournfulness or despair, rather one of tranquillity and blissfulness. Sadness would remain for someone who still willed and experienced the inevitable lack of fulfilment that comes with willing. But the will-less state is also not happiness, which Schopenhauer equates with temporary *satisfaction* of the will. The blissfulness he describes is beyond the will altogether, and not a state in which will can be either frustrated or satisfied.[16]

Schopenhauer equates will with will to life (*Wille zum Leben*): "it is a mere pleonasm and amounts to the same thing if, instead of simply saying 'the will,' we say 'the will to life'" (*WWR* 1: 301). Essential to every being that has life is its drive to perpetuate its existence, and to produce new life ("the satisfaction of the sex drive [. . .] expresses the most decisive *affirmation of the will to life*" [*WWR* 1: 354] – so it is not just a will *to live*). Schopenhauer makes will the essence not only of every living thing, but of

[15] See Lemanski 2012 on alternatives to the "linear" reading. Shapshay 2019 argues for a reading in which will-less resignation need not be the final message of *The World as Will and Representation*.

[16] For this will-less state Schopenhauer uses terms such as "peace" (*Ruhe*), "blissfulness" (*Säligkeit*) and "sublimity" (*Erhabenheit*) (see *WWR* 1: 419). Other terms occur for this state, but not *Glück*, "happiness." See Janaway (2018: 341–342).

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the world, and so if "will" means will to life, it must seem as though the whole world is aiming at living and making more living things:

> Everything strains and drives towards *existence* [*zum Daseyn*], towards *organic* existence if possible, i.e. towards *life*, and then towards the highest possible level of this: in animal nature it is obvious that *will to life* is the tonic note of its essence, its only immutable and unconditional property. Just consider this universal straining for life, look at the infinite zeal, ease and wantonness with which the will to life everywhere and at every moment strains wildly to exist in millions of forms. (*WWR* 2: 365 366)

To this Zarathustra replies directly by reporting the words of Life personified:

> "He surely missed the mark who shot at the truth with the words 'will to existence' [*Willen zum Dasein*]: this will does not exist!
>
> "For what does not exist cannot will, yet what already exists, how could that then will to exist!
>
> "Only, where life is, there too is will: though not will to life, but so I teach you will to power!
>
> "Much is valued by the living more highly than life itself, but out of this very valuing there speaks will to power!"
>
> Thus did Life once teach me. (*Z*:II "Self Overcoming")

Walter Kaufmann quotes part of this passage, then asserts that the doctrine of will to power is likely to be based on "empirical data," and "not on any dialectical ratiocination about Schopenhauer's metaphysics."[17] Kaufmann helps his case by not quoting the first sentence with its unusual singular reference: "*He* ... who shot at the truth with the words 'will to existence.'"[18] But a very natural way to read these words is as referring to Schopenhauer.[19] Whatever the basis for this doctrine of will to power (Zarathustra simply accepts it on testimony from Life), the doctrine is clearly meant to *supersede* Schopenhauer's notion of will to life.

Schopenhauer gives the will a complex role in his account of the self: (1) will is the inner kernel or essence of the human being; (2) the entire body

[17] Kaufmann (1974: 206–207).

[18] My emphasis. Zarathustra's opponents are more often plural (the despisers of the body, the preachers of death, the priests, those who pity) or abstract ("thus did madness preach," *Z*:II "Redemption" 20).

[19] Jaspers (1965: 297) and Gooding-Williams (2001: 359 n. 30) link the passage straightforwardly with Schopenhauer.

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is a manifestation of will; (3) will has hegemony over the self-conscious "I" of cognition, the subject of experience that we "find ourselves as";[20] (4) will is untiring and unchanging throughout the individual's ordinary existence (that is, barring any exceptional onset of will-lessness). For example, he says:

> [W]e are used to regarding the subject of cognition, the cognizing I, as our real self, this I that grows weary at night and vanishes in sleep and shines brightly in the morning with renewed vigour. But this is a mere function of the brain and not our ownmost self. Our true self [*wahres Selbst*], the kernel of our being, is what lies behind this brain function and really knows nothing but willing and not willing. (*WWR* 2: 252)

Zarathustra echoes this:

> "I" say you, and are proud of this word. But the greater thing in which you do not want to believe is your body and its great reason: it does not say I, but does I.
>
> . . . Tools and toys are senses and spirit [*Geist*]:[21] behind them there yet lies the Self [*das Selbst*].
>
> . . . Your Self laughs at your I and its proud leapings. "What are these leapings and soarings of thought to me?" it says to itself. "A detour to my purpose. I am the leading reins of the I and the prompter of its concep tions." (*Z*:I "Despisers of the Body")

In Schopenhauer's case the body *is* the will of the human being: "We can say: my body and my will are one" (*WWR* 1: 127), and this will is the unchanging core or essence of the individual: "What someone truly wills, the striving from his innermost essence and the goal he pursues accordingly – this is something we could never alter" (*WWR* 1: 320); "The will . . . is absolutely tireless and never lethargic, its activity is its essence and it never stops willing" (*WWR* 2: 226). Zarathustra does not say that the underlying bodily "Self" is the will, but there may be the shadow of the Schopenhauerian view in his saying "Yes, something invulnerable, unburiable, is within me, something that explodes rock: that is my will. Silently it strides and unchanging through the years" (*Z*:II "Grave-Song").

In one respect such similarities are superficial. For Schopenhauer the will is metaphysical: it is the thing in itself, an inner, timeless core of being,

[20] See *WWR* 1: 25.

[21] *Geist* could be rendered as "mind" or "intellect." Doing so in this passage would reveal the assimilation to Schopenhauer's position even more clearly. I thank Paul Loeb for this observation.

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of which empirical things are an emanation or "objectification." There is nothing to suggest that Zarathustra posits a metaphysics of the thing in itself to replace Schopenhauer's, tweaking it into a "will to power" instead of "will to life." In that respect Kaufmann was making a good point. Nonetheless, Zarathustra regards the self in a way analogous to Schopenhauer: the "I" of self-consciousness is secondary and under the hegemony of a powerful "true Self" that is expressed in the body; every living thing manifests will; and he himself has his own deep, enduring and unchanging will. From Zarathustra's point of view, Schopenhauer correctly identifies the core of the self as a will inherent in living things, but fails to grasp that life strives after power, not merely after self-perpetuation.[22]

4.4 Will-lessness and Redemption

The Schopenhauerian will and the Zarathustran will must be akin for a further reason: there is otherwise no justification for Zarathustra to be so appalled by the thought of the will's absence or negation. This crucial part of Schopenhauer's teaching is the crucial part of what Zarathustra must oppose.

Schopenhauer splits the self into two: the urgent, driving will at the core of the embodied living being, versus the "I" of cognition, the object-representing self-conscious subject that we "find ourselves as" in experience, otherwise called the subject of cognition (*Subjekt des Erkennens*). Although Schopenhauer builds up the credentials of the will as what is primary, essential, durable, and fundamentally real, it is to the secondary, "merely apparent" subject of cognition that he ultimately assigns the greater value. Schopenhauer advocates the elimination of all willing in favor of "pure cognition" (*Erkennen*). The notion of "immaculate *Erkenntniss*" that Zarathustra seeks to undermine is thus pointedly Schopenhauerian. Translation can mask this: for the sake of a play on words, translators have tended to make the English title of the relevant section "On Immaculate Perception."[23] But, regardless of how we translate

[22] In his non-fictional works Nietzsche is strongly critical of Schopenhauer's conception of the will. But "will" is a multi-faceted term for Schopenhauer. Nietzsche's criticisms (e.g., *BGE* 19) chiefly target Schopenhauer's idea that the "willing" is a unitary state with which a subject has immediate and privileged acquaintance in introspection (see *WWR* 1: 124–127).

[23] Kaufmann, Hollingdale, Parkes, and Del Caro all translate *unbefleckte Erkenntniss* as "immaculate perception." Parkes explains the pun with *unbefleckte Empfängnis*, "immaculate conception" (2005: 302).

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Erkenntniss, the truth is that Zarathustra and Schopenhauer clash over its nature: Schopenhauer *champions* its being pure and will-less, and Zarathustra *rejects* its being pure and will-less.[24]

In a state of temporary aesthetic suspension, according to Schopenhauer, we lose all desire and world-directed motivation, and "continue to exist only as pure subject, the clear mirror of the object" (*WWR* 1: 201), a state of "liberation of cognition from service to the will . . . and the elevation of consciousness to the pure, will-less, timeless subject of cognition" (*WWR* 1: 223). In the *Genealogy* (*GM* III:12) Nietzsche directly targets Schopenhauer's notion of the "pure, will-less, timeless subject of *Erkenntniss*" as a myth. And Zarathustra is critical of the same notion:[25]

> "This would be for me the highest thing" thus your lying spirit talks to itself "To look upon life without desire and not like a dog with its tongue hanging out:
>
> "To be happy in looking, with a will that has died, without the grasping or greed of selfishness the whole body cold and ashen, but with drunken moon eyes! . . .
>
> "And let this be for me the *immaculate* perception [*Erkenntniss*] of all things: that I want [*will*] nothing from things, that I may lie there before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes."
>
> Oh, you sentimental hypocrites, you lechers! You lack innocence in your desire, so now you slander desiring itself! (*Z*:II "Immaculate Perception")

Passages in the *Genealogy* elucidate the charges of hypocrisy and lechery: "There are few things about which Schopenhauer speaks so certainly as about the effect of aesthetic contemplation: he says of it that it counteracts precisely *sexual* 'interestedness' [. . .] he never grew tired of glorifying this breaking free from the 'will' as the greatest merit and use of the aesthetic condition" (*GM* III:6). But it is quite possible that "sensuality is [. . .] not suspended at the onset of the aesthetic condition, as Schopenhauer believed, but rather only transfigures itself and no longer enters

[24] Older translations of Schopenhauer use "knowing" and "knowledge" for *erkennend*, *Erkennen* and *Erkenntniss*. But *Erkenntniss* is distinct from *Wissen*, discursive, conceptual knowing or "abstract cognition" (See *WWR* 1: 77–78). The pure cognition that Schopenhauer finds in aesthetic experience is intuitive rather than abstract cognition.

[25] Gooding-Williams (2001: 358 n. 12) notes the link with Schopenhauerian aesthetic experience, but misleadingly refers to "the Kantian/Schopenhauerian subject": the ideas of "a will that has died" and the subject as a "mirror" are pure Schopenhauer and have little to do with Kant. On the differences between Kant and Schopenhauer, see Janaway (1997: 461–463).

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consciousness as sexual stimulus" (*GM* III:8). So proponents of the Schopenhauerian view of pure, will-less *Erkenntniss* would be "lechers" (*lüsterne*) and "hypocrites," in that their advocacy of liberation *from* will arises *out of* will, an erotic drive that they manage to disguise even from themselves. Will-less *Erkenntniss*, an utterly dispassionate mirroring of the world, would then be an impossibility.[26] In *Zarathustra* we find that "In *Erkenntniss* [. . .] I feel only my will's joy in begetting and becoming" (*Z*:II "Isles of the Blest"). Cognition, knowing, or understanding is dynamic and creative for Zarathustra.

Thus far Zarathustra's engagements with Schopenhauer's teaching have occurred in the text before the first mention of the Soothsayer. In the immediately following section, however, "On Redemption" (*Von der Erlösung*), matters come to a head, with Zarathustra openly contesting Schopenhauer's doctrine of redemption and replacing it with a counter-doctrine. Schopenhauer finds allegorical truth in the notion of original sin: "Our existence looks like nothing so much as the result of a false move, of a craving that deserves punishment [. . .] Every great pain, whether physical or mental, tells us what we deserve, because it could not befall us unless we deserved it" (*WWR* 2: 595–596). Both the offence and the punishment fall upon the will:

> The world is precisely what it is, because the will, whose appearance it is, is what it is, because that is what it wills. The justification for suffering is that the will affirms itself in this appearance too; and this affirmation is justified and balanced out by the fact that the will bears the suffering. This gives us a glimpse into eternal justice. (*WWR* 1: 357)

Hence the only remedy is a *negation* of the will:

> the great fundamental truth of Christianity as well as Brahmanism and Buddhism, namely the need for redemption from an existence given over to suffering and death, and our ability to attain this redemption by means of the negation of the will, that is, by assuming a decisive stand in opposition to nature, this is incomparably the most important truth that there can be. (*WWR* 2: 644)

The will is supposed to negate itself (in a way that is admittedly hard to fathom) with the assistance of no outside agency: "the *negation of the will to*

[26] A passage in Part II of *Zarathustra* seemingly runs counter to this. Zarathustra talks of *Erkenntniss* as "learning to smile and be without jealousy," the will being "unharnessed" and "desire falling silent in beauty" (*Z*:II "Sublime").

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life [. . .] signifies [. . .] the mere act of not-willing [*Aktus des Nichtwollens*]; the same thing that willed hitherto wills no more" (*PP* 2: 281).[27]

When Zarathustra warns against the preachings of "madness" in "On Redemption," he all but quotes Schopenhauer:

> And because there is suffering in whatever wills, from its inability to will backwards thus willing itself and all life were supposed to be punish ment! [. . .]
>
> "Morally things are ordered according to justice and punishment. Oh where is there redemption from the flux of things and the punishment 'existence'?" Thus did madness preach. [. . .]
>
> "Unless the will should at last redeem itself and willing become not willing [*Nicht-Wollen*] ": but you know, my brothers, this fable song of madness! (*Z*:II "Redemption")

In speaking of *Erlösung* coming only through *Wollen* turning to *Nicht-Wollen*, this voice of "madness" is speaking in pure Schopenhauerian language.[28] Zarathustra's counter-doctrine is that willing liberates, and that the will can redeem itself by willing the past, "to re-create all 'It was' into a 'Thus I willed it!' —that alone should I call redemption." A succinct passage in Part III makes clear the contrast between Zarathustran and Schopenhauerian redemption, and shows that the latter is the consequence of the pessimistic teaching identified by the Soothsayer: "To *their* ears it sounds delightful when it is preached: 'Nothing is worth while! Ye shall not will!' But this is the preaching of servitude. [. . .] Willing liberates: for willing is creating; thus I teach" (*Z*:III "Old and New Tablets" 16). In other words, Zarathustra's redemption reverses the view that because existence is in vain, the only redemptive solution is to cease willing – Schopenhauer's view.[29] Schopenhauer understands suffering as

[27] Particularly hard to fathom is how the same thing can *be* the will to life while not willing life, or *be* the will while being free from any willing. Schopenhauer was challenged on this by his follower Frauenstädt in 1852 (see Schopenhauer (1978: 568–569); in reply he simply asserts: "That [will] can become detached from willing is shown, in the *human being*, by asceticism in Asia and Europe, over millennia" (288, my translation).

[28] As is stated by Gooding-Williams (2001: 209). Others have linked this passage to Nietzsche's reading of Anaximander. See Lampert (1986: 146), and Shapiro, who rightly says also that "the preaching of madness sounds increasingly like Schopenhauer's doctrine that the only form of redemption available to humans is abandoning the will" (2017: 97). Paul Loeb parses "willing become not willing" as death (2010: 165). This seems to ignore Schopenhauer's vision of a redemption that occurs in life by ceasing to will. On the other hand, Schopenhauer accepts that "the complete negation of the will can reach the point where even the will needed to maintain the vegetative functions of the body through nutrition can fall away," resulting in "death by voluntary starvation" (*WWR* 1: 428).

[29] See Gooding-Williams (2001: 359 n. 32).

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the inhibition or non-fulfilment of willing (*WWR* 1: 336). Zarathustra identifies the past as the most recalcitrant obstacle to the will: we suffer because we can never will it to be different, and redemption from this suffering is to be found in willing rather than not-willing, specifically in "re-creating all 'It was' into a 'Thus I willed it!'"

The notion of "willing the past" is obscure and contested. At one extreme one may be skeptical and regard it as not a real case of willing, but rather a self-gratifying falsification of one's past attitudes, a mere re-casting the past under the guise of its having been willed.[30] At the other extreme is the interpretation by Paul Loeb, according to which Zarathustra manifests a superhuman "power over time" and comes to embody the circularity of time in his experience, so that he can literally will backwards.[31] If we take the skeptical view, Zarathustra's "redemption" offers to erase suffering from one's understanding of the past by a fictionalizing portrayal of it in which nothing goes against one's will. The "power over time" view shares with Schopenhauer the notion that the will is self-sufficient in its capacity to bring about redemption: while Schopenhauer advocates the will's transforming itself into a non-willing, Zarathustra envisages the will's self-transformation into something that can will the past. In both cases ordinary human willing is to be left behind. For Schopenhauer, blissful redemption belongs to the rare kind of figure he calls a saint; for Zarathustra, redemption is a task that he alone has discovered, and which extant humans cannot accomplish. But however precisely we are to understand "willing the past," Zarathustra's positive notion of redemption makes most sense as an attempted reversal of the doctrine of redemption closest to hand for Nietzsche, namely Schopenhauer's.

So far, we have found Schopenhauer's true voice in the doctrine of redemption preached by "madness"; in the posture of the "hypocritical lechers" who yearned for pure will-less cognition; and in the one who shot at the truth with "will to existence" – all doctrines singled out for rejection by Zarathustra. This is enough to support the claim that Schopenhauer is consistently an antagonist in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. Moreover, this would be the case had the character of the Soothsayer, whatever he represents, never appeared in the book. Zarathustra has ample materials for a critical response to Schopenhauer's teaching. Schopenhauer is in a way correct to

[30] This is suggested in an unpublished work by Richard Elliott, "Eternal Recurrence, 'On Redemption' and the Risk of Self-Deception." See Loeb (2010: 187–189) for citations of similar views in the literature.

[31] See Loeb (2010: 9).

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grasp *will* as the key notion in understanding human existence and in attaining redemption from it, but his conception must be radically altered. Will must be reinterpreted as will to power, and redemption cannot come from the will's eliminating itself, but rather "the will that is will to power" (*Z*:II "Redemption") has to be the agent of its own liberation.

It at least seems clear that "willing the past" intimates the all-important theme of eternal return. So it is of note that Schopenhauer had already thought of a kind of eternal return, imagining "[s]omeone . . . who, after calm reflection, could wish that his life as he has experienced it so far would be of endless duration, or of perpetually new recurrence [*immer neuer Wiederkehr*]" (*WWR* 1: 310). We do not really know what Schopenhauer has in mind here: it may be an ongoing renewal of life afresh, rather than its circular return. But any such thing could be willed only by someone "without . . . any personal experience or far-reaching insight into the continuous suffering that is essential to all life" (*WWR* 1: 310). A person *with* that insight could not will the recurrence of life, or even living once more: "[P]erhaps there will never be a man who, clear-headed and sincere at the end of his life, would want to do it all again – he would much rather choose complete non-existence instead" (*WWR* 1: 350). The full insight into suffering would put an end to life-affirmation:

> Wherever he looks, he sees the sufferings of humanity, the sufferings of the animal kingdom, and a fleeting, fading world.[. . .] Given what he knows about the world, how could he affirm this very life by constant acts of will, binding himself ever closer to it, embracing it ever more tightly? [. . .] The will begins turning away from life: it shrinks from each of the pleasures in which it sees life being affirmed. (*WWR* 1: 406)

One would be taken to this point by a heightened universal compassion (*Mitleid*) from which springs the redemptive negation of the will to life (*WWR* 1: 405–406). In Part III, Zarathustra seems aware of this antagonism between compassion and affirmation, because he first says that *Mitleiden* "is the deepest abyss: as deeply as the human being sees into life, so deeply does it see into suffering," and then immediately counters *Mitleid* with courage, which says, "Was *that* life? Well then! One more time!" (*Z*:III "Vision and Riddle" 1). Zarathustra thus agrees with Schopenhauer: only by overcoming the abysmal, compassionate insight into suffering could one want life again.[32] So now it becomes important to examine *Mitleid*, and whether it can or should be overcome.

[32] See Lampert (1986: 164); Cartwright (1993: 54–55).

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4.5 Zarathustra against *Mitleid*

The term *Mitleid* (along with the verbal noun *Mitleiden*) is notoriously difficult to translate into English. Most recent translators opt for "pity" or "compassion."[33] Kaufmann again appears blind to the connection with Schopenhauer when he writes that "Aristotle, Spinoza, and La Rochefoucauld, of whose precedent Nietzsche makes much, have all been translated in the past as criticizing 'pity.'"[34] These are not the most reliable reference points if we trust Nietzsche's prominent statement that it was "almost solely" with Schopenhauer that he had to struggle over the value of "the instincts of *Mitleid*, self-denial, self-sacrifice" (*GM* P:5). In a note from 1888, he confirms that he found the greatest danger in *Mitleiden*, calling it "that virtue of which Schopenhauer taught that it was the highest."[35] So in order to discover what merited so much struggle, it is Schopenhauer's conception of *Mitleid* we must consider. It has been argued convincingly that we understand Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* best by linking it to compassion.[36] Thus should Nietzsche's uses of the term be rendered as "compassion" when he is engaging Schopenhauer's conception? David Cartwright has argued to the contrary that while Schopenhauer advocates compassion, Nietzsche criticizes pity, thereby possibly misidentifying his target.[37] In response, Gudrun von Tevenar argues that, although Nietzsche challenges the value of pity, compassion is nonetheless the target of his distinctive objection that *Mitleid* is detrimental to the one who gives it.[38]

There is a danger in concentrating too much on translations. Martin Liebscher warns that "Instead of trying to understand Nietzsche's thinking, this approach adapts his philosophy to the English-speaking mind."[39] However, the issue is deeper than the mere words. Schopenhauerian *Mitleid* consists in "willing the well-being of the other" for its own sake, motivated entirely non-egoistically by the other's pain per se. The compassionate agent sees the other as "I once more," and feels the other's suffering in an immediate participatory manner, to the extent of an extreme identification which breaks down all distinction between self and other (see *BM*:199–200; 254–255). Schopenhauer's *Mitleid* is

[33] Loeb uses "commiseration" for *Mitleid*, chiming with "misery" for *Leid* (see Loeb [2010: 110]).
[34] Kaufmann (1971a: 4). [35] *KSA* 13:15[13].
[36] Cartwright (1988); Tevenar (2007). Frazer (2006) views Nietzsche's anti-Schopenhauerian target as compassion. Cartwright (1993) and Abbey (2000: 62) emphasize that Nietzsche's struggle over *Mitleid* is with Schopenhauer, but consistently refer to pity.
[37] Cartwright (1988). [38] Tevenar (2007: 279). [39] Liebscher (2008: 163).

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supreme selflessness, which at the limit involves self-sacrifice: one of his favorite examples is that of the Swiss patriot Arnold von Winkelried, clutching all the enemy Austrian spears to himself in order to die saving his comrades. Thus "pity," which has connotations of disparagement and distance from the sufferer,[40] suggests an attitude that diverges significantly from what Schopenhauer intends. Schopenhauer also assimilates *Mitleid* to Christian *agape* (*WWR* 1: 402), and holds that all pure love (without self-interest) is identical to compassion (*WWR* 1: 405).[41] It is perhaps better to talk simply of "Schopenhauerian *Mitleid*," and to realize that if Nietzsche's struggle is against Schopenhauerian *Mitleid*, his struggle is not simply against pity.

Zarathustra is persistently averse to *Mitleid*. In the section entitled "*Von den Mitleidigen*" (translated as "On Those Who Pity"), he first associates *Mitleid* with shame:

> [T]he noble bids himself not to shame others: he bids himself have shame before all that suffers.
>
> Verily, I do not like them, the merciful, who are blessèd in their *Mitleiden*: too lacking are they in shame.
>
> If I must be *mitleidig*, then I do not want to be called such; and if I am [*mitleidig*], then rather from a distance. (*Z*:II "On Those Who Pity")

Here *Mitleid* sounds like pity: the other's being seen as suffering shows them in a demeaning light, and shames them, but to bring shame on others is also shameful: one should not want to be the pitier who looks on and thereby lights up the other's suffering. But later in the same section Zarathustra is at pains to state that "great love" is above *Mitleiden*. This seems odd if we are still thinking of pity: does it *need stating* that loving someone is not the same as observing their suffering in a way that shames them and ourselves? This comment is more likely addressed to someone like Schopenhauer for whom "pure love" is *identical* with *Mitleid*. Zarathustra's point is that you love someone by allowing them their suffering rather than removing it, whereas those who count *Mitleiden* as a virtue "have no reverence for great misfortune" (*Z*:IV "Ugliest Man"). Nietzsche's best explanation of the benefits of allowing someone their

[40] "[P]ity permits . . . the expression of non-sympathetic attitudes of condescension and contempt. Hence it follows that pity, and not compassion, is open to the much voiced objection of allowing, and perhaps even fostering, feelings of superiority and contempt and thus of shaming and humiliating its recipients" (Tevenar 2007: 264). Frazer (2006: 60–61) makes a similar point.

[41] Schopenhauer contrasts the two forms of love: "Selfishness is *erōs*, compassion is *agapē*" (*WWR* 1: 402–403), the latter linked with selfless morality, the former with the will to life (see *WWR* 1: 356).

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suffering comes in *The Gay Science*: we cannot guess the significance of anyone's suffering for them merely from its being categorized as suffering, and its significance is revealed only by grasping its place in the "whole inner sequence and interconnection" of which it is part (*GS* 338). Thus Zarathustra's recommendation – "Become hard!" (*Z*:III "Old and New Tablets" 29) – need not be read as an injunction to cruelty, rather as "resist the imperative to remove suffering!" the imperative instilled by the system of values Nietzsche calls the "religion of *Mitleid*" (*GS* 338), which makes prevention of suffering the sole criterion of well-being and thereby impoverishes human beings, in Nietzsche's view.[42] Also in *Gay Science* 338 Nietzsche speaks of the disvalue of *Mitleid to the one who gives it*, and it is this that has greater relevance to what happens in Part IV of *Zarathustra*, where *Mitleid* is revealed as Zarathustra's greatest obstacle.

4.6 The Temptation of *Mitleid*

Part IV of *Zarathustra* is framed by the Soothsayer's new challenge to Zarathustra. In *Z*:IV, "The Cry of Need" (or "of distress," *Nothschrei*), the Soothsayer tells Zarathustra that the Munch-like *Schrei* that is heard in the world is a call of help from the "higher human." The Soothsayer says "I come that I may seduce you to your ultimate sin," and the sin is that of *Mitleiden* for the higher human in answer to the cry of distress. Right at the end Zarathustra recognizes this as his ultimate sin, and can overcome it: "*Mitleiden* for the higher human! ... Well then! *That*—has had its time!" (*Z*:IV "The Sign," translation modified). If there is any point to the Soothsayer's "being" Schopenhauer, it had better be Schopenhauerian *Mitleid*, or compassion, that seduces Zarathustra. On the other hand, the would-be identification can only be ironic, because *Schopenhauer* could never refer to *Mitleid* as a sin. The Soothsayer's function once again is not to advocate a Schopenhauerian position, but, from within Nietzsche's Zarathustran framework, perhaps from within his psyche, to prompt Zarathustra to realize what he has to overcome.[43]

In referring to *Mitleid* as a temptation or seduction for Zarathustra, Nietzsche comes close to autobiography. When he has Zarathustra say,

[42] See Janaway (2017a: 78–88).

[43] Cartwright, for whom "Schopenhauer is the soothsayer" (1993: 52), highlights the irony in its being Schopenhauer who tells Zarathustra his *Mitleid* is a sin. He thinks the Soothsayer has two aims: to convince Zarathustra that "all is the same, nothing is worthwhile" and to set Zarathustra on his own unique anti-Schopenhauerian path (67). In my view, the Soothsayer's aims are just anti-Schopenhauerian.

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"In caring and *Mitleiden* my greatest danger has always lain" (*Z*:III "Return Home"), he is virtually quoting himself. *The Gay Science* 271 reads: "*Where lie your greatest dangers?* —in *Mitleiden*." And Nietzsche stuck to this theme. In 1884, he wrote in a letter: "From childhood on, the proposition 'my greatest dangers lie in *Mitleiden*' has confirmed itself again and again," and in notebooks from the same year "*Mitleiden* my weakness, which I am overcoming."[44] A further published passage written in Nietzsche's own voice strengthens this impression of autobiography:

> I, too, know with certainty that I need only expose myself to the sight of real distress [*Noth*] and I, too, *am* lost! If a suffering friend said to me, "Look, I am about to die; please promise to die with me," I would promise it; likewise the sight of a small mountain people [*Bergvölkchens*] fighting for its freedom would make me offer my hand and my life [. . .] Yes, there is a secret seduction even in all these things which arouse compassion and call out for help. (*GS* 338, translation slightly modified)

The tone is personal, and the seductive trait sounds like Schopenhauerian *Mitleid*, for in these examples the self-neglect and total absorption in the well-being of the other are quite unlike pity. We might even reflect that Schopenhauer's prime case of the Swiss von Winkelried *literally is* someone dying for a mountain people fighting for its freedom! In the same passage Nietzsche makes it clear, again in personal sounding terms, that immersing oneself in the suffering of others has a seductive power because it relieves one of a difficult task: "I know, there are a hundred decent and praiseworthy ways of losing myself *from my path* . . . [F]or our 'own way' is so hard and demanding and so far from love and gratitude of others that we are by no means reluctant to escape from it and our ownmost conscience" (*GS* 338, translation slightly modified).

So *Mitleid* is a temptation or seduction because it is comfortable, less demanding, a distraction from one's own course. Zarathustra's final realization in Part IV recapitulates this point: "My suffering and my *Mitleiden* – what does that matter! Am I striving then for happiness? I am striving for my *work*!" (*Z*:IV "The Sign"). Whatever Zarathustra's work were to be, *Mitleid* could seduce him away from it. But *Mitleid* is doubly significant here if Zarathustra's work is to teach (and even to embody) eternal return.[45] For if Schopenhauer is right, a person seized sufficiently by *Mitleid* will meet an inevitable obstacle to affirming the

[44] Letter to Franz Overbeck, 14 September 1884 (*KSB* 6: 533); *KSA* 11:25[498]. See also Parkes (2005: 310–11).

[45] As in Loeb's account (2010: 2).

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eternal return: "how could he affirm this very life by constant acts of will, binding himself ever closer to it, embracing it ever more tightly?" (*WWR* 1: 406).

Zarathustra's temptation is not a Schopenhauerian universal *Mitleid*, but *Mitleid* solely for the "higher human." However, Nietzsche apparently succumbs to something like this temptation, when he professes a "higher" *Mitleid* for those who are harmed by the imperative to protect the weak from suffering:

> *Our Mitleid* is a higher, more far sighted *Mitleid*: we see how humanity is becoming smaller, how you are making it smaller! [. . .] [I]n the human being there is also creator, maker, hammer hardness, spectator divinity and seventh day [. . .] And *our Mitleid* don't you realize who our *inverted Mitleid* is aimed at when it fights against your *Mitleid* as the worst of all pampering and weaknesses? (*BGE* 225)

This is a paradoxical version of *Mitleid*, because it reacts to a harm that comes from *not suffering*, a diminishment of the creative, power-willing side of humanity that requires its suffering in order to flourish. Nietzsche does not see this "higher *Mitleid*" as something to avoid, yet for Zarathustra an apparently similar attitude is a "sin." Why this difference? We might venture two answers. The first answer is that Nietzsche portrays himself and Zarathustra differentially, with Zarathustra able to overcome a temptation to "higher *Mitleid*" that he himself cannot. This would sit with a reading by Paul Loeb (2005), according to which Nietzsche deliberately places himself in contradistinction to Zarathustra, whom he calls "a younger one . . . a stronger one than I am," one uniquely capable of a redemptive affirmation and "great health" (*GM* II:24–25). A second resolution that does not require this differentiation (though it is compatible with it) is the view, proposed by Michael Frazer, that "overcoming" *Mitleid* does not mean not feeling it, but rather feeling it and mastering it. Evidence for this view comes from *Ecce Homo*:

> I consider the overcoming of *Mitleid* a *noble* virtue: I have written about the case of "Zarathustra's temptation" [. . .] To stay in control [*Herr bleiben*], to keep the *height* of your task free from the many lower and short sighted impulses that are at work in supposedly selfless actions, this is the test, the final test, perhaps, that a Zarathustra has to pass his real *proof* of strength. (*EH* "Wise" 4)

Frazer comments, "Zarathustra does not pass the greatest test of his strength by purging compassion from his psyche. To the contrary, he affirms his painful experience of the emotion as creativity-enhancing and

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life-promoting" (Frazer 2006: 75–76). So the "overcoming" of which Nietzsche speaks need not involve hardening oneself to the point of not feeling compassion, but rather being master of it. Zarathustra need not lack compassion, so long as he is noble enough not to be seduced from his work when he feels its call. Likewise, Nietzsche can in principle remain susceptible to his "higher *Mitleid*" for the greatness and creativity in humanity, but not inevitably lose his "own path" by letting *Mitleid* obliterate all his other impulses.

4.7 Conclusion

We asked what Schopenhauer would have made of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. He might have recognized the slogans "All is empty, all is the same, all has been" and "nothing is worthwhile, world is without meaning" (the latter not actually Schopenhauer's view) as a simplistic attempt to encapsulate his own teaching. He would have seen this teaching attributed to the Soothsayer character in Part IV. But he would also have seen the Soothsayer deployed against Schopenhauerianism: first to prophesy that pessimism is about to cause a slide into nihilism, then that Zarathustra is susceptible to *Mitleid* in a detrimental way that will block his ability to teach or affirm eternal return. In light of these roles, we should stop saying that the Soothsayer "clearly portrays" Schopenhauer. Furthermore, I have argued that attention to the Soothsayer masks the substantial presence of the real Schopenhauer as a systematic foil that allows Zarathustra to develop his core ideas. Schopenhauer would have found Zarathustra preoccupied with will, redemption and compassion, trying to modify will into a striving for power, and bent on inverting the crucial ideas that compassion is a step toward redemption, and that redemption itself comprises the self-abolition of the will, the will turning to not-willing. While naturally thinking that the attempted reversals of his doctrines were mistaken, Schopenhauer might at least have been pleased that Zarathustra sounds like someone who has been reading Schopenhauer. Whatever its other distinctive features, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* embodies a philosophical polemic quite as much as Nietzsche's other works.[46]

[46] Thanks to Keith Ansell-Pearson, Ken Gemes, Andrew Huddleston, Paul Loeb, Matthew Meyer and Gudrun von Tevenar for comments on earlier drafts.

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CHAPTER 5

Nietzsche's Naturalism and Thus Spoke Zarathustra

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Philosophical naturalism is one of the predominant movements in contemporary Anglo-American philosophy. It is therefore not surprising that interpreting Nietzsche as a naturalist has become one of the dominant approaches to his thinking in Anglophone scholarship (Leiter 2019: 2). However, the push to fit Nietzsche within the contemporary discourse of naturalism may have come at a cost. One such cost is that it has contributed to the marginalization of the text Nietzsche understood to be his magnum opus, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, as well as two views that play a central role in the text: the cosmological understandings of the eternal recurrence and the will to power. Although there are reasonable debates about Nietzsche's commitments to the cosmological formulations of these doctrines, there is little doubt about the significance Nietzsche attaches to *Zarathustra*, a work he considers his "greatest gift" to humankind (*EH* "Preface" 4). Thus, the worry is that the push to make Nietzsche into a naturalist has created a significant discrepancy between the way we want to understand Nietzsche and the way Nietzsche understood himself.

This discrepancy, however, is not due to reading Nietzsche as a naturalist per se – for if Nietzsche is in fact a naturalist, and I think he is, then there will be no such discrepancy – but rather due to certain features of the naturalist reading that has gained prominence through the work of Brian Leiter. From the beginning, Leiter (1992 and 2002) has opposed his naturalist reading to Alexander Nehamas' (1985) aestheticist reading of Nietzsche.[1] Because *Zarathustra* seems to be a work of drama or poetry rather than science or systematic philosophy, it falls by the wayside when we focus on Nietzsche's naturalism at the expense of his aestheticism. Moreover, Leiter rejects the cosmological formulations of the will to power and (presumably) the eternal recurrence as forms of "crackpot metaphysics," and he openly encourages interpreters to look for ways to distance

[1] I have sought to reconcile these interpretive strands in Meyer (2015).

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Nietzsche from these views (2013: 594).[2] Because *Zarathustra* provides evidence for such views, those who want to distance Nietzsche from these ideas have correspondingly sought to downplay the significance of Nietzsche's magnum opus.

In this chapter, I try to overcome the disjunction between reading Nietzsche as a naturalist and the significance Nietzsche attaches to *Zarathustra* and the ideas expressed therein. In Section 5.1, I argue that we should understand Nietzsche as a naturalist, but not in the way Leiter construes the term. Specifically, we should focus more on Nietzsche's context and understand him as embracing the naturalism that his predecessor, Arthur Schopenhauer, rejects. For Schopenhauer, naturalism is opposed to metaphysics or the belief in entities that go beyond the limits of experience and transcend the natural world, and, in Section 5.2, I suggest that Nietzsche adopts the cosmological versions of the will to power and the eternal recurrence to complete a project of naturalism that Schopenhauer believes cannot be completed. This is significant because both Schopenhauer and Nietzsche agree that naturalism destroys the foundations for morality, but whereas Schopenhauer opposes naturalism to preserve the basis for his life-denying morality, Nietzsche makes naturalism central to a life-affirming project that goes "beyond good and evil."

In Section 5.3, I apply this framework for thinking about Nietzsche's naturalism to *Zarathustra*. Because Nietzsche presents both the will to power and the eternal recurrence in their cosmological formulations in *Zarathustra*, I argue that *Zarathustra* is the work in which Nietzsche completes the aforementioned naturalism and thereby goes "beyond good and evil." I then provide some remarks about how the drama of *Zarathustra* centers around the difficulty Zarathustra has in accepting the fatalistic implications that naturalism has for his self-understanding and sense of agency. If this is right, *Zarathustra* is an essential feature of Nietzsche's naturalism, and *Zarathustra* can be understood as providing a dramatic portrayal of what it is like to be naturalized.

5.1 Nietzsche's Naturalism in Context

Although there now seems to be broad agreement that Nietzsche is a naturalist, there is still significant disagreement about the kind of naturalist

[2] More precisely, Leiter makes these claims about the will to power, but I think he would also apply this to the cosmology of the eternal recurrence. Indeed, he sees it as an "ethical doctrine" that "has only a tangential connection to Nietzsche's naturalism" (2019: 6). I thank Paul Loeb for noting this.

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Nietzsche is supposed to be. According to Leiter's most recent account, Nietzsche is best understood as a speculative methodological naturalist. On this view, there is a continuity between philosophical inquiry and the methods of the successful sciences. The continuity of method lies in the fact that Nietzsche's philosophical investigations use "general principles" to provide deterministic explanations of human phenomena. His naturalism is nevertheless speculative because Nietzsche's claims about human nature neither are "confirmed in anything resembling a scientific manner" nor do they "win support from any contemporaneous science" (2019: 2–3), even though Nietzsche grounds his speculations on observation and evidence (2019: 10–11).

To be sure, there is nothing inherently mistaken about the sort of naturalism Leiter attributes to Nietzsche. Nietzsche embraces – at least in *Human, All Too Human* – the methods of the natural sciences, and he provides what are arguably deterministic explanations for natural phenomena. However, Leiter's definition of naturalism omits any essential claim about rejecting transcendent or metaphysical entities. Even though this is taken for granted by many interpreters, this is perhaps the most important feature of Nietzsche's naturalism, and the significance of this feature should not be underestimated for reasons I explain below. Leiter's definition also eschews any substantive connection to the results of the natural sciences. This, however, is also crucial to Nietzsche's project, as he appeals to such results to justify claims he makes about the fundamental constituents of nature.

One of the difficulties of specifying the nature of Nietzsche's naturalism is that he rarely uses the term, and when he does, it is hard to extract an operative definition. Nevertheless, we can get a better sense of how Nietzsche might be a naturalist by turning to his sources. Although Leiter references historical figures such as Ludwig Büchner and Friedrich Lange (2019: 2 n. 3), there is textual evidence indicating that the key to understanding Nietzsche's naturalism lies in his engagement with Schopenhauer's rejection of naturalism in the section, "On Humanity's Metaphysical Need," from the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*.[3]

[3] My point here is not to deny the influence of other figures on Nietzsche's understanding of naturalism. Lange is undoubtedly important, and so are others. For instance, Keith Ansell-Pearson (2013: 103–108) has argued that the work of Jean-Marie Guyau can shed light on Nietzsche's naturalism.

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For Schopenhauer, naturalism is opposed to metaphysics. By metaphysics, Schopenhauer understands "any cognition that claims to go beyond the possibility of experience, which is to say beyond nature or the given appearance of things, in order to disclose something about that which [. . .] conditions appearance; or [. . .] about what is hidden behind nature and makes it possible." In contrast, "genuine *naturalism*" is "a physics" which asserts "that its explanations of things [. . .] were really adequate and hence accounted exhaustively for the essence of the world." For Schopenhauer, physics is "concerned with the explanation of phenomena in the world." Therefore, we can say that naturalism is a "*physics without metaphysics*" and so "a theory that makes appearance into the thing in itself," and Schopenhauer points to figures who were naturalists in this sense: Leucippus, Democritus, Epicurus, D'Holbach, Lamarck, and Cabanis (*WWR* II:17).[4]

In defending metaphysics, Schopenhauer explains why this sort of naturalism necessarily fails. Here, he points to two fundamental imperfections. First, he claims that physics tries to explain the phenomenal world by referring to "laws of nature" that rest on "forces of nature." The problem is that this explanatory system establishes a chain of causes and effects in which the beginning can never be reached. Because each event is explained by a previous one, the chain of causes and effects recedes "*in infinitum*," and this infinite regress leaves the entire chain unexplained. The second problem is that efficient causation, from which everything is explained, "rests on something completely inexplicable." By this, Schopenhauer means that qualities such as weight, hardness, and elasticity are manifestations of natural forces. However, these forces are occult and inexplicable qualities.[5] Thus, Schopenhauer writes, "there is not a single shard of broken clay, however worthless it may be, that is not composed of quite inexplicable qualities" (*WWR* II:17). Because of these explanatory gaps, Schopenhauer thinks that the naturalist will never be able to claim victory over the metaphysician and extinguish our need for metaphysics.

Schopenhauer's critique of naturalism is also an attempt to defend the metaphysical basis of morality. Schopenhauer believes that metaphysics provides a necessary foundation for morality, and therefore naturalism,

[4] Schopenhauer's published works are cited in this chapter as follows: *BM* *On the Basis of Morals* (Schopenhauer, 2009); *PP I*, *PP II* *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Schopenhauer 2014, 2015); *WWR I*, *WWR II* *The World as Will and Representation*, Vols. 1 and 2 (Schopenhauer, 2010, 2018).

[5] For more on forces as occult qualities, see Poellner (1995: 46–57), who traces this objection back to Berkeley.

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which destroys metaphysics, puts an end to his moral project. Thus, Schopenhauer claims that "the necessary credo of everyone just and good" is "I believe in a metaphysics" (*WWR* II:17). The key to understanding the connection between morality and metaphysics lies in Schopenhauer's understanding of free will. Although our empirical characters are destined or fated to be what they are, we can nevertheless transcend the principle of sufficient reason and deny the very will that expresses itself in the empirical world. Thus, metaphysics makes free will possible, and free will consists not in the choice of how we act or who we become – for this is already determined – but in whether we affirm or deny the will itself (*WWR* I:70).

In other texts, Schopenhauer stresses the connection between metaphysics and morality. In *On the Basis of Morals*, he claims that both philosophical and religious systems agree that "the ethical significance of actions must be at the same time a metaphysical one," and therefore "in ethics the need of a metaphysical basis is all the more urgent" (*BM* 21). In *Parerga and Paralipomena*, Schopenhauer stakes out an even stronger position: "That the world has only a physical and not a moral significance is a fundamental error, one that is the greatest and most pernicious, the real *perversity* of the mind [*Perversität der Gesinnung*]. At bottom, it is also that which faith has personified as the *antichrist*" (*PP* II 109). In other words, a world with a purely physical significance eliminates any sort of metaphysical significance, and since a metaphysical significance is necessary for ethical significance, a purely physical or natural interpretation of the world destroys ethics or morality. In this way, a proponent of naturalism would, according to Schopenhauer, rightfully be understood as the antichrist.

The fact that Schopenhauer casts the naturalist as an immoralist and even the antichrist gives us *prime facie* evidence for thinking that Nietzsche, who openly embraces these epithets, is a naturalist in Schopenhauer's sense. Further evidence for this reading can be found in Nietzsche's critique of metaphysics and a related program of naturalism in *Human*. Nietzsche begins the work by opposing his own "historical philosophy" to "metaphysical philosophy," and he links the former to the methods as well as the results of the natural sciences (*HH* 1).[6] After devoting the remainder of the first chapter to attacking metaphysics as such, he then eliminates, in the next three chapters, metaphysical beliefs from the realms of morality, religion, and art.

[6] In this chapter, I've used the following translations: *BGE* 1968, *BT* 1968, *EH* 1968, *GS* 1974, *GM* 1968, *HH* 1996, *PPP* 2001, *PTAG* 1962, *TI* 1954, *WP* 1968, *Z* 1954.

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In each of the first four chapters of *Human*, Nietzsche targets Schopenhauer's notion of a "metaphysical need" from the second volume of *The World as Will and Representation*. In the first chapter of *Human*, Nietzsche explicitly refers to Schopenhauer. Although he praises Schopenhauer for including much science in his philosophy, Nietzsche criticizes him for letting the old "metaphysical need" eventually dominate (*HH* 26). In the second chapter, he speaks of a "historical knowledge" that may one day serve as an axe that will cut the root of the "metaphysical need" (*HH* 37). In the third chapter, Nietzsche criticizes Schopenhauer's allegorical interpretation of religion for operating under the demands of the metaphysical need (*HH* 110), and, in the fourth chapter, Nietzsche bids the metaphysical need farewell (*HH* 153).

In his later writings, we find additional evidence that Nietzsche is embracing the very naturalism Schopenhauer rejects. Nietzsche was well aware of Schopenhauer's opposition between naturalism and ethics because he quotes, in a *Nachlass* note, the aforementioned passage from *On the Basis of Morals* (*KSA* 11:25[441]). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche again mentions the "metaphysical need" and connects it to a project of overcoming the "atomistic need" in both natural science and psychology (*BGE* 12). Moreover, he begins section five, entitled "Natural History of Morals," by quoting directly from *On the Basis of Morals*. Here, Nietzsche claims that basing morality on metaphysics will come across as "insipidly false and sentimental" to anyone who believes that the essence of the world is will to power (*BGE* 186).

Just after writing *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche penned prefaces to a number of his earlier works, and, in the 1886 preface to *The Birth of Tragedy*, he explicitly quotes the phrase, "perversity of mind [Perversität der Gesinnung]," that Schopenhauer associates with both naturalism and the antichrist.[7] Nietzsche claims that *The Birth of Tragedy* betrays a spirit that will "one day fight [. . .] the *moral* interpretation and significance of existence," and that his book represents "a pessimism 'beyond good and evil'." As the rest of the section makes clear, Nietzsche's objection to Schopenhauer's morality is that it represents "'a will to negate life', a secret instinct of annihilation." *The Birth of Tragedy* opposes this morality with an antichristian Dionysianism that offers an aesthetic justification and affirmation of existence (*BT* "Attempt" 5).

[7] Jörg Salaquarda (1973: 109–110, 124–125) has shown that Nietzsche was influenced by Schopenhauer on this point. Also see Janaway (2017b: 160).

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For my purposes, the phrase, "perversity of mind," enables us to connect Nietzsche's attack on morality to the very naturalism Schopenhauer rejects. Again, a "perverse mind" insists on a natural interpretation of the world at the expense of a moral interpretation, and Nietzsche pledges his allegiance to the former in this preface. But if Nietzsche is a naturalist in Schopenhauer's sense, he first needs to be committed to a scientific account of nature that reduces everything to force and he then needs to find a way to respond to the two objections that Schopenhauer raises against the naturalist's attempt to eliminate metaphysics. In Section 5.2, I argue that Nietzsche is committed to such an ontology of force and that the cosmological formulations of the will to power and the eternal recurrence, both of which are grounded in this ontology, can be understood as Nietzsche's response to Schopenhauer's twofold challenge to naturalism.

5.2 Nietzsche's Crackpot Naturalism?

One of the problems that confronts the cosmological interpretations of the will to power and the eternal recurrence is that a number of readers deny that Nietzsche intended these doctrines to be understood in this way.[8] The cosmological reading of the will to power is the claim that all reality is will to power. The cosmological interpretation is often contrasted with a biological reading – in which all life is will to power – and a psychological reading – in which persons are said to be motivated by power in some important sense. As noted at the beginning of this chapter, Leiter refers to this cosmological idea as "crackpot metaphysics" and argues that we would do Nietzsche the philosopher "a favor" if we expunged this view from his thought (2013: 594). The cosmological reading of the eternal recurrence has met a similar fate. Such a reading understands the view to be making a truth claim about the cosmos: all events repeat themselves in the same order and in the same way, and these events have already happened an infinite number of times in the past and will happen an infinite number of times in the future. After early readings that took the view to be cosmological in nature – readings which highlighted problems inherent in the view – many commentators now hold that the eternal recurrence is a practical thought experiment that makes no truth claim about the cosmos (Anderson 2017). Although not always explicit, the underlying idea seems

[8] For a general overview, see Anderson (2017: Sec. 6.1, 6.3).

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to be that we would do Nietzsche a favor by reconstructing his thought so as to avoid attributing to him this crackpot cosmology.

In divorcing Nietzsche's thought from the cosmological versions of these views, commentators often invoke the principle of interpretive charity (Clark 1990: 270; Leiter 2019: 61). This principle allows the interpreter to elevate the evidentiary threshold that needs to be met to attribute a philosophically questionable view to a thinker. When the principle of charity is invoked, we might say that the evidence must show "beyond a reasonable doubt" that Nietzsche holds a suspect view rather than looking at a mere "preponderance of the evidence." Having elevated the evidentiary standard, charitable commentators then look to shed doubt on evidence for these views from both the *Nachlass* and *Zarathustra*. Whereas the *Nachlass* is discounted because Nietzsche never published the ideas therein,[9] *Zarathustra* is disregarded as a work of fiction. Doubt is then cast on the remaining passages from the published works read in isolation from each other. It is then concluded that because no single passage – such as *GS* 341 or *BGE* 36 – provides clear-cut evidence that Nietzsche endorses the cosmological versions of the eternal recurrence or the will to power, we should, as a matter of charity, avoid attributing these "crackpot" views to him.

To respond to such readings, I want to pursue a two-step argument that I will develop in the opposite order in which I describe it. First, I want to attack the idea that we need to exercise the principle of charity in these cases by understanding the cosmological versions of these views in context. Although I do not provide a defense of these doctrines as positions that contemporary philosophers should accept, I argue that even if these views are judged as "crackpot" by contemporary standards, they are nevertheless part of what might be called Nietzsche's "crackpot naturalism" that is nevertheless quite sensible when read in the context of Schopenhauer's critique. Second, although it is familiar terrain, I briefly highlight some of the textual evidence for attributing these views to Nietzsche. However, I proceed in a way that contrasts sharply with the method used by the aforementioned charitable commentators. Rather than isolating the various pieces of evidence from each other and casting doubt on each in turn, I argue that when we combine passages from *Zarathustra* with other passages from the published works and then supplement our interpretation of the published passages with *Nachlass* notes as well as Nietzsche's

[9] Commentators such as Leiter have also argued that Nietzsche wanted his *Nachlass* burned or destroyed (see Leiter 2019: 60–61). For an important corrective to this story, see Huang (2019).

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historical sources, we find substantial evidence for attributing to Nietzsche the cosmological formulations of the eternal recurrence and the will to power.

I start with the cosmological formulation of the eternal recurrence. There are two sections from *Zarathustra* III in which evidence for such a reading is found: "On the Vision and the Riddle" and "The Convalescent." In the former, Zarathustra presents the idea in a showdown with the spirit of gravity, and the explication of the concept is clearly cosmological. Not only does Zarathustra ask whether all things "are knotted together so firmly that this moment draws after it *all* that is to come," but also whether "this slow spider, which crawls in the moonlight, and this moonlight itself, and I and you in the gateway" must not "have been there before" (*Z*:III "Riddle"). In the latter, Zarathustra's animals explain what Zarathustra teaches: "that all things recur eternally, and we ourselves too; and that we have already existed an eternal number of times, and all things with us. [. . .] there is a great year of becoming, a monster of a great year, which must, like an hourglass, turn over again and again so that it may run down and run out again" (*Z*:III "Convalescent"). Taken together, it is clear that Zarathustra is presented as the teacher of a cosmological version of eternal recurrence.

So far so good. But can we infer from the fact that Zarathustra is presented as the teacher of a cosmological version that Nietzsche himself understands the eternal recurrence to be a truth claim about the nature of the cosmos? Not necessarily. However, Nietzsche presents the doctrine in *Ecce Homo* as an essential part of his own "tragic philosophy," and he compares it to the cosmological theories of Heraclitus and the Stoics (*EH* BT:3). Elsewhere, Nietzsche claims to be the teacher of the eternal recurrence (*TI* "What I Owe" 5), and he seems to present the view as his own near the end of the 1882 edition of *The Gay Science* (*GS* 341). Although many question whether this aphorism commits Nietzsche to making a cosmological claim, it uses the same language of "this spider and this moonlight" as the cosmological version in "The Riddle," and the metaphor of "the eternal hour glass of existence" is also found in "The Convalescent."[10]

If there are still doubts about the status of the view in *GS* 341, it is important to note that *GS* 341 is not the first mention of the doctrine in *The Gay Science*. Nietzsche also references the view in passing in *GS* 285, "the eternal recurrence of war and peace,"[11] and he speaks of a "musical

[10] See Loeb (2013: 647) on this point. [11] For more on this aphorism, see Loeb (2021b).

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box" eternally repeating its tune in *GS* 109. The reference in *GS* 109 is undoubtedly oblique and some have raised concerns that it is one of the "aesthetic anthropomorphisms" that Nietzsche is critiquing in the passage (Clark 1990: 254). However, by way of its title, "Let Us Beware," we can see that Nietzsche is thinking about the eternal recurrence in relation to cosmological debates of his day. First, we can connect the title of *GS* 109 to at least three notes from this time in which this phrase is used, and, in these notes, Nietzsche formulates the eternal recurrence in cosmological terms (*KSA* 9:11[157], [201], [202]). Second, Paulo D'Iorio has shown that Nietzsche first encountered this phrase, "let us beware," in Eugen Dühring's *Course of Philosophy*, and Dühring uses the phrase in the context of discussing questions about the beginning of the cosmos (2014: 74). Taken together, it becomes clear that the first mention of the eternal recurrence in Nietzsche's work should be understood cosmologically.

However, if Nietzsche presents the eternal recurrence in *GS* 109 as a truth claim about the cosmos, it would be unlikely that he would recast the idea in the same work as a mere thought experiment in *GS* 341, and if *GS* 341 is not a mere thought experiment, then it seems highly unlikely Nietzsche would present it as a mere thought experiment in *Zarathustra*. Thus, once we take passages from *Zarathustra*, connect them with other published passages (*GS* 341 and 109), supplement our interpretation of these passages with information from the *Nachlass* (KSA 9:11[157]), and place these ideas in their historical context (Dühring), we have good reasons for thinking that Nietzsche presents the eternal recurrence in *Zarathustra* not merely as a thought experiment he knows to be false, but rather as a view about the cosmos he takes to be true.

In *Zarathustra*, there is less evidence for the cosmological reading of the will to power than the eternal recurrence. The concept is mentioned in three different passages, and the strongest evidence for the view occurs in the section, "On Self-Overcoming." However, the evidence presented there seems to limit the claim to the psychological and biological realms. On the one hand, we are told that a presumably psychological notion of the "will to truth" is really "a will to power." On the other hand, Nietzsche claims that "only where there is life is there also will" and that the "will to life" is the "will to power" (*Z*:II "On Self-Overcoming). Thus, based on the evidence here, it seems that Nietzsche has yet to endorse a cosmological version of the will to power.

There are, however, two points in response to this reading. First, just because he speaks about or applies the concept to a particular sphere in a given note or passage, it does not follow that Nietzsche's understanding of

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the view is limited to that sphere. Thus, it could be that although we only have evidence attesting to Nietzsche's application of the concept to the realm of "life" in *Zarathustra*, it is nevertheless possible that Nietzsche is thinking in cosmological terms. Second, and more importantly, we know from his 1882 *Nachlass* that Nietzsche was, at the time of writing *Zarathustra*, thinking of the will to power as a modification of Schopenhauer's "will to life" (*KSA* 10:5[1]), and this is a point substantiated by Nietzsche's talk of a "will to life" and a "will to existence" in "On Self-Overcoming."[12] This is important because we know that Schopenhauer understood the will to life to be synonymous with the will and that the will expresses itself in both the organic and inorganic world (*WWR* I:54 and *WWR* II:28). In short, Schopenhauer understands the will to life in cosmological terms. Thus, although Nietzsche's language in *Zarathustra* seems to limit the will to power to the realm of life, the context of his remarks indicates that he has the cosmological version in mind.[13]

Turning to Nietzsche's post-*Zarathustra* writings, we encounter a wide range of textual evidence attesting to a cosmological reading of the will to power. In the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche argues that the "will to power" is the "will of life" (*GS* 349). In the *Genealogy*, Nietzsche asserts that the will to power is operating in "all events" (*GM* II:12). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche claims that "life itself is *will to power*" (*BGE* 13) and he speaks of "a world whose essence is will to power" (*BGE* 186). Elsewhere, he claims that "life simply *is* will to power" and that the "will to power" is "the will of life" (*BGE* 259). Again, some of these statements are explicitly cosmological, while others suggest that the will to power is a modification of Schopenhauer's will to life. Read in isolation from each other, no one passage provides indubitable proof that Nietzsche holds a cosmological version of the will to power. However, taken together, the evidence begins to mount in favor of attributing such a view to Nietzsche.

This brings us to *BGE* 36, the most discussed aphorism in which Nietzsche presents the cosmological version of the will to power.[14] On a straightforward reading of the passage, Nietzsche presents a series of hypothetical claims that, if true, would give him "the right to determine *all* efficient force univocally as—*the will to power*" (*BGE* 36). Although Maudemarie Clark has proposed what has been called an ironic reading of

[12] See Chapter 4.
[13] I thank Kaitlyn Creasy, Ian Dunkle, and Paul Loeb for pressing me on this point.
[14] See Loeb (2015a) for a detailed analysis of the section.

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the text in which Nietzsche has knowingly constructed a bad argument relying on false premises (1990: 205ff.), Tsarina Doyle has shown that Clark's reading rests on a misunderstanding of Nietzsche's views on the causality of the will (2009: 115–119). Although I think Doyle is right, if there is any doubt about the meaning of the passage, it seems perfectly reasonable – even obligatory – to look to *Nachlass* notes for help. One such note became the final section of unpublished book, *The Will to Power*, and although Leiter has claimed that Mazzino Montinari has "conclusively discredited" the passage (2019: 57), what Montinari actually says is that Nietzsche no longer felt compelled to publish the note because *BGE* 36 already expresses its main sentiment (2003: 89–90), namely, that the world, in Nietzsche's mirror, "*is the will to power—and nothing besides!* And you yourselves are also this will to power—and nothing besides!" (*WP* 1067/*KSA* 11:38[12]).

There are, of course, a number of other *Nachlass* notes that further attest to Nietzsche's commitment to a cosmological version of the will to power. However, I now want to turn to the task of making sense of these views in context. We can start by recalling some points from Schopenhauer's discussion of naturalism. The first is that naturalism is the attempt to use the results of the natural sciences to provide a complete explanation of natural phenomena without recourse to metaphysical entities, which Schopenhauer calls things-in-themselves. According to Schopenhauer, the natural sciences of his day have reduced the natural world to "natural forces," and the naturalist tries to explain phenomena by appealing to laws of nature that rest on these natural forces (*WWR* II:17). Schopenhauer further claims that this project cannot be completed because these natural forces are unknown qualities, thereby failing to provide the basis for a proper explanation, and because the chain of causes and effects lacks an initial cause, the entire chain is left unexplained. For these reasons, science can only provide relative or conditional explanations, and therefore a complete explanation of reality must be supplemented by metaphysics.

A defender of naturalism could respond to Schopenhauer by insisting that we ought to give up the need for ultimate explanations, perhaps undergoing therapy to extirpate this need. Here we would root out the metaphysical need by taking an axe to what we might call the "explanatory need." In this way, we would just head off – as a sort of sickness – any impulse to "wonder" at the phenomena or to ponder the "riddle" of existence. Although Nietzsche certainly engages in this sort of therapy regarding the metaphysical need, I think he still wants to indulge the

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explanatory need, and the primary function of the cosmological versions of the will to power and the eternal recurrence is to complete the project of naturalism by conceiving of the natural world as a self-enclosed and self-explanatory entity. Once this project is complete, there will no longer be any need to wonder about what reality might be like behind or beyond the phenomena.

Although the argument is a compressed one, I think there is a fairly clear path to seeing how the will to power and the eternal recurrence are part of Nietzsche's naturalist program. We can begin by connecting Nietzsche's naturalism to his interest in the *results* of the natural sciences in general and his view, which follows Schopenhauer, that the natural sciences reduce the world to interrelated forces.[15] Evidence for such a view can be found throughout Nietzsche's writings. In his lectures on Pre-Platonic philosophy, Nietzsche claims that the main proposition of the natural sciences is that "all things flow" because we "always come in the final analysis to forces" (*PPP*, 60). Although the text does not explicitly mention force, the first chapter of *Human* appeals to the methods and results of the natural sciences to claim that all material things – including the atom – have been reduced to motion (*HH* 19). In *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche makes a similar assertion. In his rejection of soul atomism, he claims that the physicist-mathematician, Roger Boscovich, has taught us to "abjure the belief in the last part of the earth that 'stood fast,'" namely, the particle-atom (*BGE* 12). Although there is no mention of force in the passage, we know from Nietzsche's letters that he appeals to Boscovich's work to claim that everything is force (*KSB* 6: 213).

The ontology of force that Nietzsche finds in Boscovich forms the basis for his claim that the world is will to power. In *BGE* 36, the interpretation of scientific forces as wills to power is explicit: Nietzsche presents a series of propositions that would, if true, give him the right to "determine *all* efficient force univocally as—*will to power*." In relationship to Schopenhauer's critique of naturalism, the significance of this transformation cannot be overlooked. Specifically, Nietzsche responds to Schopenhauer's charge that forces are explanatorily vacuous not by introducing a numerically distinct metaphysical entity like Schopenhauer's will to do this explanatory work, but rather by re-interpreting natural forces as equally natural (non-metaphysical) wills to power. In the language of oft-cited *Nachlass* notes from this period, Nietzsche is taking the "victorious concept of 'force'" from physics and ascribing an inner quality or world to

[15] See Meyer (2014: 123-128) for a further explication of this claim.

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it that he calls will to power (*WP* 619/*KSA* 11:36[31]; *WP* 618/*KSA* 11:36 [34]), and it is this inner quality that provides the explanatory principle needed to complete the project of naturalism.

Let us now look at the eternal recurrence. To recall, Schopenhauer claimed that the second problem facing the naturalist is that she could not point to a beginning that explained the entire chain of causes and effects, and this left the entire chain of events unexplained. That the cosmological version of the eternal recurrence provides a response to this challenge should go without saying. In short, the doctrine eliminates the need for a beginning by conceiving of the events of the world as a self-explanatory circle or a "ring of being that remains faithful to itself" (*Z*:III "The Convalescent" 2).

That Nietzsche was thinking in these terms can be substantiated by the *Nachlass*. First, we know that Nietzsche's attempted proofs for the doctrine – like his concept of the will to power – start from the scientific concept of force. Nietzsche claims that if force is finite but time is infinite, it follows that the course of events must repeat itself at some point (*KSA* 9:11[202]; *WP* 1066/*KSA* 13:14[188]). Second, Nietzsche states that this "eternally self-creating, eternally self-destroying" world has no beginning and no end (*WP* 1067/*KSA* 11:38[12]). Thus, "we need not worry for a moment about the hypothesis of a *created* world" because the world is something that "becomes" and then "passes away" but "it has never begun to become and never ceased from passing away" (*WP* 1066/*KSA* 13:14 [188]). In short, the cosmological version of the eternal recurrence eliminates the need for a first cause of the natural world and thereby addresses the second of the two objections Schopenhauer raises against naturalism.

Here some might be concerned that Nietzsche is hardly using science to complete his naturalist program. Although the cosmological versions of both the will to power and eternal recurrence are rooted in the scientific concept of force, they nevertheless extend beyond what the natural sciences – either then or now – might justify. In response, one could argue that the eternal recurrence can be *inferred* from the results of the natural sciences, and one could point to evidence from biology to show how Nietzsche might justify the will to power. However, I tend to think of both ideas as conscious interpretations that are neither fully justified nor contradicted by the natural sciences, and Nietzsche adopts these as preferred interpretations to put an end to the metaphysical-moral interpretation of existence and replace it with a naturalism that makes possible the aesthetic affirmation of existence. As I have argued elsewhere (Meyer 2014: 244–259), there are reasons for thinking that Nietzsche presents the will to

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power as a self-conscious interpretation of natural forces, and he acknowledges that events of the natural world can be interpreted in an alternative fashion (*BGE* 22). If we ask why Nietzsche chooses the will to power as an explanatory principle rather than, say, laws of nature, it is because the will to power most promotes life (*BGE* 4). Although there is stronger evidence that he thinks the eternal recurrence can be inferred from the results of the natural sciences, Nietzsche presents the idea in a poetic context with an air of mysticism (*EH* Z:1; *GS* 341) that arguably parallels his description of Thales' intuition that everything is water (*PTAG* 3). Thus, even though the idea might not be entirely justified by the results of the natural sciences, we should nevertheless privilege the cosmological version of the doctrine over other cosmologies because it eliminates the need for metaphysics, overcomes the moral interpretation of existence, and makes possible a complete affirmation of life.

5.3 The Naturalism of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*

If this understanding of the relationship between Nietzsche's naturalism and the cosmological formulations of the will to power and the eternal recurrence is correct, then we have reason to think that *Zarathustra*, the work in which Nietzsche presents both ideas together for the first time, is essential to Nietzsche's naturalism. In this concluding section, I support this claim by making two points. First, I provide evidence that Nietzsche understands *Zarathustra* as the work in which the metaphysical-moral tradition comes to an end. Although there could be other reasons why Nietzsche associates *Zarathustra* with the overcoming of this tradition, I think reading *Zarathustra* as a contribution to Nietzsche's naturalism provides the best explanation of these associations. I then argue that *Zarathustra* is essential to Nietzsche's naturalism because it provides a dramatic portrayal of what it is like for the main character, Zarathustra, to be naturalized by incorporating these ideas into his own being. As I contend, naturalism has consequences for how Zarathustra understands himself and his sense of agency, and it is only near the end of the drama in *Zarathustra* III that he is prepared to accept the consequences of his naturalism.

One important piece of evidence for the naturalist reading of *Zarathustra* comes from *Twilight of the Idols*. There, Nietzsche provides an account of how the so-called "true world" – and by this he means the metaphysical world – became a fable. After listing a series of five stages, some of which can be mapped onto the history of philosophy and others

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onto Nietzsche's works,[16] he describes a sixth and final stage in which the distinction between the true and apparent world is abolished. Here, he refers to both "noon" – a key motif in *Zarathustra* – and "INCIPIT ZARATHUSTRA" (*TI* "Fable"). This latter phrase refers to the title of the final aphorism of the 1882 edition of *The Gay Science*, "incipit tragoedia," in which Nietzsche first pens the opening lines of *Zarathustra* (*GS* 342). Taken together, this passage indicates that *Zarathustra* is the work in which (1) the metaphysical tradition comes to an end, (2) the distinction between the true and apparent world is abolished, and (3) the apparent or natural world now becomes the true world. Given that Schopenhauer defines naturalism as a view that eliminates the appearance-reality distinction and makes the apparent world into the real world, this passage alone is sufficient to demonstrate that Nietzsche understands *Zarathustra* to be a work of naturalism in Schopenhauer's sense.

Turning to *Zarathustra*, we see that the work both assumes and then furthers the rejection of metaphysics. The book begins with Zarathustra descending from his cave, and after meeting the old saint in the forest, he reveals something that the saint appears not to know: "God is dead" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 2). Although the death of God itself does not represent the end of the metaphysical world – Schopenhauer is an example of an atheist metaphysician – it is clear that God's death, already announced in works like *The Wanderer* (*WS* 84) and *The Gay Science* (*GS* 108, 125),[17] represents a significant step in this direction. Zarathustra then presents his teaching of the superhuman to the townspeople, commanding them to "*remain faithful to the earth*" and not to "believe those who speak to you of otherworldly hopes!" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3). Zarathustra further elaborates on his rejection of the metaphysical world in "On the Afterworldly." There, he explains how the belief in a metaphysical *Hinterworld* arises from dissatisfaction with our selves (*Z*:I "On the Afterworldly").

As we have seen, Schopenhauer thinks that the destruction of metaphysics also entails the destruction of morality, and Nietzsche understands *Zarathustra* as a work that goes "beyond good and evil." In *Ecce Homo*, he explains that he chose the figure of Zarathustra to undo what the historical Zoroaster did, namely, transpose good and evil into the metaphysical machinery of things. In contrast, Zarathustra is the "annihilator of morality" (*EH* "Books" 1), who executes a self-overcoming of morality out of

[16] See Meyer (2019: 55–56) for such an account. See Clark (1990: 95–125) for an alternative account.
[17] Nietzsche originally planned to have Zarathustra, not the "madman," announce God's death in *The Gay Science* (*KSA* 14:256–257).

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truthfulness (*EH* "Destiny" 3). In a later *Nachlass* note, entitled, "The Great Noon," Nietzsche asks, "why Zarathustra?" And he answers, "the great self-overcoming of morality" (*KSA* 13:18[15]).

That Zarathustra occupies this amoral standpoint is also suggested by a range of textual evidence. In the poem, "Sils Maria" from *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche presents Zarathustra as emerging from "beyond good and evil." In "Before Sunrise," Zarathustra states that "all things have been baptized in the well of eternity and are beyond good and evil; and good and evil themselves are but intervening shadows and damp depressions" (*Z*:III "Before Sunrise"). Near the end of *Zarathustra* III, life tells Zarathustra that they have found their island and green meadow "beyond good and evil" (*Z*:III "The Other Dancing Song"), and in "The Retired," the old pope tells Zarathustra that his "overgreat honesty will yet lead you beyond good and evil" (*Z*:IV "The Retired").

One of the primary functions of the will to power in *Zarathustra* is to provide a naturalistic explanation of the origin of good and evil. In its first appearance in the text, Zarathustra claims that "a tablet of the good hangs over every people" which represents their "overcomings" and "the voice of their will to power" (*Z*:I "On the Thousand and One Goals"). In its second appearance, Zarathustra claims that "what the people believe to be good and evil" betrays "an ancient will to power" (*Z*:II "On Self-Overcoming"). In short, the notion of the will to power plays an important role in replacing metaphysical explanations with natural explanations of morality, thereby moving us to a standpoint "beyond good and evil."

We also know that Nietzsche connects the eternal recurrence with the notion of "beyond good and evil." In the aforementioned *Nachlass* note in which Nietzsche proclaims that the world is will to power, he associates the notion of "beyond good and evil" with an eternally recurring cosmos (*WP* 1067/*KSA* 11:38[12]). This conceptual link also appears in numerous book and chapter titles for a project that eventually became *Beyond Good and Evil*. In one note, we have a proposed book title of "The New Enlightenment" with a subtitle, "Toward a Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence," and a chapter title, "Beyond Good and Evil" (*KSA* 11:26 [298]). In another note, we find "The Eternal Recurrence" as a book title with "Beyond Good and Evil" as a section title (*KSA* 11:27[58]). In another, "Beyond Good and Evil" is the title of the book, and "A Prelude to a Philosophy of the Eternal Recurrence" is the subtitle (*KSA* 11:26[325]).

Thus, Nietzsche clearly associates *Zarathustra* and the doctrines expressed therein with the overcoming of the metaphysical-moral

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tradition. Given that naturalism is the antipode to both metaphysics and Schopenhauer's life-denying morality, these associations provide good reasons for thinking that *Zarathustra* is essential to Nietzsche's naturalism. Nevertheless, such a reading of *Zarathustra* still leaves us wondering why Nietzsche would embed these doctrines in a dramatic work of poetry or literature that he associates with the genre of tragedy (*GS* 342). The answer, I think, lies in the fact that naturalism also entails a form of necessity that undermines free will, and this is a consequence that Zarathustra – like Oedipus – finds difficult to accept.

To see why this is the case, we can again turn to Schopenhauer's concerns about the implications of naturalism. According to Schopenhauer, a metaphysical notion of the thing-in-itself is a necessary condition for the kind of freedom needed to deny the will. For Schopenhauer, the natural world is governed by the principle of sufficient reason and is therefore the realm of necessity. Indeed, Schopenhauer denies that we have any sort of freedom or *liberum arbitrium indifferentiae* to determine who we are or what we do within this realm. Our characters are fixed in advanced, and everything we do follows from who we are. However, Schopenhauer argues that there is a freedom associated with the "will-in-itself" in which metaphysical knowledge can act as a quieter of the will. By going beyond the principle of sufficient reason, knowledge opens up a realm of freedom that Schopenhauer calls the "kingdom of grace." This sort of freedom makes it possible to deny the will, and it is through this act of freedom that one is "reborn" as a "new man" who now renounces both the will and the world (*WWR* I:70).

If, however, we reject metaphysics and therefore the metaphysical basis for freedom, we are only left with nature or what Schopenhauer calls the realm of necessity, and we must confront the fact that we are destined to become the very characters that we are. We can neither change the details of who we are nor engage in a metaphysical denial of the will. In my view, it is precisely these fatalistic consequences of naturalism that Zarathustra initially finds so hard to accept, and it is Zarathustra's initial reluctance but then ultimate acceptance of his role as the teacher of the eternal recurrence that constitutes the drama of *Zarathustra*.

Indeed, it has long been noted by commentators that the cosmological version of the eternal recurrence can be connected to the notions of necessity and fate. However, scholars such as Ivan Soll (1973) and Bernd Magnus (1978) have objected to the cosmological version of the eternal recurrence for precisely this reason. On their reading, the ethical or existential version of the eternal recurrence is supposed to intensify "the

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dynamics of choice" (Clark 1990: 250), and the fatalism implied by the cosmological version undermines these dynamics. This is especially true if, as Paul Loeb has argued (2010: 15–16), there is no first cycle in which the choices I make determine the course of events that will be repeated infinitely. Instead, for any iteration of the cycle, what I am going to do has already been done, and there is no sense in which I can undo or alter this sequence of events. In this way, the cycle of events eternally is what it is and cannot be otherwise.

In contrast to those who think that the disjunction between ethical decision-making and the deterministic or fatalistic implications of the eternal recurrence cosmology are good reasons to reject the cosmological reading, I think this disjunction simply reinforces the idea that Nietzsche intends the cosmological version to take us beyond a morality of good and evil and the conception of agency that underlies this morality (*GM* I:13). That Nietzsche links the eternal recurrence to the concept of necessity is suggested by *GS* 109, and this is supported by numerous notes from the *Nachlass*, most notably in variants to *GS* 109 (*KSA* 9:11[201]) and *GS* 341 (KSA 9:11[143]). That Nietzsche links the eternal recurrence to the notion of fate is evidenced by the placement of the eternal recurrence and *amor fati* in the fourth book of *The Gay Science*.[18] Whereas the book begins with the task of learning to love fate and thereby becoming a "yes-sayer" (*GS* 276), the book ends with the presentation of the eternal recurrence (*GS* 341) and the tragedy of *Zarathustra* (*GS* 342). Thus, if there is any sort of existential task associated with the eternal recurrence, it lies in learning to love oneself (*GS* 290; ZIII: "On the Spirit of Gravity") and one's fate (*GS* 270). Indeed, this is just what a Nietzschean tragedy would be: after some initial reluctance and even outright resistance, a tragic hero like Zarathustra must come to terms with his fate and the world.

Another, yet related, way of construing the drama of *Zarathustra* is to think of it as a process in which Zarathustra is "naturalized" by accepting his role as the teacher of the eternal recurrence and thereby "incorporating" the doctrine into his soul (*KSA* 9:11[141]; *GS* 110). In my view, Zarathustra's incorporation of the eternal recurrence amounts to his "going under" (*Z:*III "The Convalescent" 2) and even his "death."[19] However, his death is not to be understood in biological terms. Instead, it is a death of a

[18] Elsewhere, Nietzsche links *amor fati* to the love of necessity (*GS* 276; *KSA* 9:15[20]), wanting nothing to be different for eternity (*EH* "Clever" 10), and wanting "the eternal cycle" (*WP* 1041/ *KSA* 13:16[32]).

[19] See Loeb (2010) for an important reading that stresses the death of Zarathustra but construes this death differently.

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non-naturalized conception of oneself and one's agency. In short, it is the death of a self in which the agent believes she can stand above or outside nature and control it. At the same time, Nietzsche seems to associate the transformation that occurs with the incorporation of the eternal recurrence with the old–new man dynamic that Schopenhauer finds in Christianity and attributes to his own philosophy.[20] However, the "new man" that emerges from Zarathustra's incorporation of the eternal recurrence is not Schopenhauer's will-denying ascetic but rather the child foreshadowed in Zarathustra's first speech, "On the Three Metamorphoses."

Evidence for connecting the teaching of the eternal recurrence to the child can be found in the first presentation of the eternal recurrence in the *Nachlass*. There, Nietzsche explains that by incorporating the eternal recurrence we place ourselves as children before that which previously constituted "the seriousness of existence" (*KSA* 9:11[141]). One essential feature of the child is the ability to play, and, in his earlier works, Nietzsche connects the child to both the cycle of creation and destruction exhibited in tragedy (*BT* 24) and the ability to find "play in necessity" (*PTAG* 8). The other essential feature of the child is its "innocence." In the 1881 *Nachlass*, Nietzsche associates the eternal recurrence with "the play of life" and "necessity and innocence" (*KSA* 9:11[144]). In his earlier works, Nietzsche contrasts the innocent play of the child with Schopenhauer and Anaximander's moral condemnation of the world: "In this world only play, play as artists and children engage in it, exhibits coming-to-be and passing away, structuring and destroying, without any moral additive, in forever equal innocence" (*PTAG* 7). In "On the Three Metamorphoses," Zarathustra explains that "the child is innocence, a new beginning, a game, a self-propelled wheel, a first movement, a sacred 'Yes'" (*Z*:I "On the Three Metamorphoses).

In *Zarathustra*, we can see the innocent play of the child as the antithesis to the moral seriousness represented by the "spirit of gravity," an attitude that Zarathustra overcomes by accepting his fate as the teacher of the eternal recurrence. Understanding *Zarathustra* as a work that moves us to a childlike state of innocence beyond good and evil is what we would expect if, as I have argued, Nietzsche agrees with Schopenhauer about the consequences that naturalism has for morality and constructs *Zarathustra* to complete the project of naturalism. By teaching the cosmological versions of the will to power and the eternal recurrence, Nietzsche understands Zarathustra as bringing the metaphysical tradition to an end. At the

[20] Also see Seung (2005: xviii).

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same time, the destruction of the metaphysical world entails the destruction of a moral interpretation of existence that condemns this world for failing to live up to what it *ought* to be. In this way, the naturalism of *Zarathustra* restores "the innocence of becoming" (*TI* "Errors" 8) and makes possible a complete affirmation of existence in which one "wants to have what was and is repeated into all eternity" (*BGE* 56). So understood, we can begin to see why Nietzsche attributed such significance to *Zarathustra* and why it would be a mistake for those who read Nietzsche as a naturalist to marginalize the work and the ideas contained therein.[21]

[21] Thanks to Keith Ansell-Pearson, Kaitlyn Creasy, Ian Dunkle, Chris Janaway, Scott Jenkins, Paul Katsafanas, Paul Loeb, Allison Merrick, Mark Migotti, Alexander Prescott-Couch, and Justin Remhof for comments on an earlier draft.

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CHAPTER 6

Nietzsche's Solution to the Philosophical Problem of Change

Paul S. Loeb

My topic in this chapter is Nietzsche's claim to have provided a new solution to the problem of change that sparked the ancient Greek invention of philosophy and that has preoccupied philosophers ever since. According to this problem, there is a dilemma involved in our attempt to understand the nature of change. On the one hand, suppose we claim, as Aristotle first did in his response to Parmenides (*Physics* I.2–3), that there is always some underlying subject of change that stays the same throughout the change. In that case, as process philosophers have argued, it would appear that we are contradicting ourselves by using the absence of change to explain the pervasive and fundamental reality of change.[1] On the other hand, suppose we claim that there is no such continuous subject of change and that nothing ever stays the same in any respect whatsoever. In that case, as Plato first objected against the Heracliteans, it would appear that we are conceding our inability to understand the phenomenon of change.[2] This is because we cannot identify what comes before or after the change, much less re-identify what comes after the change in terms of what comes before the change. Throughout his early career, Nietzsche rejected the first horn of the dilemma and embraced the second.[3] But he could not find a way to respond to Plato's objection until August 1881, when he claimed to have discovered that all change is not just "absolute" (as he puts

[1] See for example James (1950), Chapter XV; Bergson (1965), Chapter VI; Whitehead (1978), Part II, Chapter X; Deleuze (1994), Chapter I.

[2] See *Theaetetus* 183a, *Cratylus* 440a–b; Aristotle, *Metaphysics* 987a, 1010a, 1078b.

[3] See *PPP* (2001: 6, 62–65, 84–85); *PTAG* (1962: 51–52); *HL* (1995: 89); *HH* (1–2, 11, 16–19, 635). For some discussion, see Poellner (1995: 30–36), Richardson (1996: 73 ff.), Welshon (2004: 79–80, 166–167), Small (2010: 17 ff.). Most philosophers today (cf. Gallois [2016]) cite common sense and ordinary experience as reasons for embracing the first horn of the dilemma. But see Nietzsche's argument below that these are both intellectual constructs which incorporate the life- and species-preserving projective error of diachronic self-identity.

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it), but also eternally recurring.[4] What he means by this is that nothing ever stays the same in any way from one moment to the next, but also that everything – *including* this succession and sequence of moments – stays exactly the same from one cycle of the eternally recurring cosmos to the next. Thus, there is always a recurring synchronic sameness in the midst of absolute diachronic change that allows us to identify and re-identify what comes before and after any change. In this way, Nietzsche concludes, we are able to avoid contradiction and incoherence in our philosophical understanding of change.

In what follows, I show how Nietzsche expressed and defended these points in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. As helpful clarifying context, I also cite some of the notes he wrote while exploring his new thought of eternal recurrence and while composing this book. First, I outline those places in which Nietzsche asserts the reality of absolute diachronic change while at the same time proposing an error theory of diachronic sameness. Second, I examine his presentation of a new cosmological truth concerning the eternal repetition of all absolute diachronic change. And, finally, I discuss those places in which Nietzsche claims that this new truth entails a new concept of synchronic self-identity that solves the philosophical problem of change. Since *Zarathustra* is a fictional book that dramatizes the narrative arc of the protagonist's engagement with his thought of eternal recurrence, my exposition concentrates on two sets of passages[5]: (1) Zarathustra's announcement at the end of Part II that the reality of absolute diachronic change is the single most important philosophical problem; and (2) Zarathustra's anticipation at the end of Part II, and his confirmation at the start of Part III, that his thought of eternal recurrence is the key to solving this problem.

6.1 Eternal Flux

There are four chapters in *Zarathustra* where Nietzsche makes general assertions about the reality of diachronic change. These are, in the order in which they appear, "Upon the Blessed Isles," "On Redemption," "On the Vision and the Riddle," and "On Old and New Tablets." In the first of

[4] Nietzsche uses the phrases "*absolut Fluss*," "*absolut Werden*," and "*absolut Bewegung*," in his unpublished notes. See, for example, *KSA* 9:11[162, 281, 293], *KSA* 10:4[83], *KSA* 11:26[58].

[5] See the Introduction to this anthology as to why the fictional form of Nietzsche's book does not in any way undermine his endorsement of the views he attributes to his protagonist. In Loeb 2010 and 2015b, I argue that this fictional form reinforces Zarathustra's teaching of eternal recurrence through a narrative depiction of his eternally recurring life.

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these, Zarathustra says that the best allegories should speak of time and becoming and should be a praise and vindication of all impermanence.[6] At the same time, he rejects the idea of diachronic sameness by attacking those who teach concepts of permanence as well as those who claim that time does not really exist and that all impermanence is actually a lie. In this speech, however, Zarathustra confines himself to speaking of what is healthy, beneficial, and necessary for humans to think about, especially creative types who are always in the process of being transformed, giving birth, and perishing. However, in his later speech on redemption, Nietzsche goes on to suggest that these best allegories actually describe *the nature of reality*. Here Zarathustra introduces the idea of time's "it was," meaning that everything is always changing and passing away. He also describes it as the view that time does not run backward, meaning that it flows in only one direction, from the past to the present and into the future. In an allusion to the ancient Greek mythological figure of Kronos, he says that time is greedy and devours its own children, meaning that time kills every present moment to which it gives birth by consigning it to the past.

Next, in his speech on old and new tablets, Zarathustra alludes to Heraclitus' famous river fragments and offers a brief metaphorical argument for the *universality* of diachronic flux. Because we compare a flowing river to the fixed timbers that span it and to the firm footbridges and railings that leap over it, and because we see even the river stop flowing when it turns to ice during the winter, we mistakenly suppose that there is no credibility to the view that *everything* is always in flux. Indeed, in another attack on the idea of diachronic sameness, Zarathustra explains that this temporary seasonal change is the source of the false teaching that basically everything stands still. Soon enough, however, the seasons change again and the thawing wind arrives and then the ice breaks and melts, causing even the ice-encrusted footbridges and railings to break and to fall into the river that is now flowing again, thus revealing the true reality of universal diachronic flux.

Finally, in the chapter entitled "On the Vision and the Riddle," Nietzsche makes it clear that he regards all change as *absolute* and *eternal*, that is, as happening at every moment and in every respect for all eternity. This dialogue is centered around Zarathustra's vision of a gateway named

[6] The following translations are consulted in this chapter: *CWFN* (2019, 2020, 2021, forthcoming); *GS* (1974, 2001); *HL* (1995); *JS* (2019); *SE* (1995); *WLN* (2003); *WP* (1968, 2017); *Z* (1954, 1969, 2005, 2006, forthcoming).

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"Moment" that has two faces, one pointing ahead and one pointing behind. There are also two long and seemingly eternal lanes that extend on either side of the gateway and that seem to collide and contradict each other inside the gateway. This idea of a contradiction is somewhat obscure and has provoked a lot of debate, but I think Nietzsche just has in mind his concept of change. As he explains in a contemporaneous note: "Everything has two faces: one of passing away, one of coming into being" (*KSA* 10:4[88]). Since he (along with the philosophical tradition) defines change in terms of passing away and coming into being, this note just means that everything is always changing. The gateway thus represents the present moment in which change happens, the lane behind represents the past into which everything passes away, and the lane ahead represents the future where everything comes into being. Hence, inside the gateway of the present moment, where these two lanes meet, there appears to be a collision and a contradiction between passing away and coming into being. According to Zarathustra, this constant change in every present moment is true of anything that is able to run on the lanes and of anything that is able to happen – by which he just means, anything that is able to come into being and pass away. As examples, he offers himself and his archenemy who are whispering together *inside* the gateway, along with the slow spider crawling in the moonlight, and the moonlight itself. Moreover, Zarathustra adds, even this gateway itself is something that is able to run on the lanes – meaning that every present moment is also constantly changing, that is, coming into being and passing away in order to make way for a new present moment.

These are the *Zarathustra* places, then, where Nietzsche asserts the reality of universal, eternal, and absolute diachronic change. But what are Nietzsche's reasons for this assertion? Some scholars have suggested that Nietzsche thinks this reality is shown by the empirical evidence of our senses, as perhaps extended through the discoveries of the natural sciences.[7] However, Nietzsche criticizes this idea in his contemporaneous notes by arguing that our senses, even when empowered and extended by the natural sciences, are in no way acute enough to detect the reality of radical flux. Indeed, he argues, our senses, and also the natural sciences that incorporate our intellectual constructs, actually lead us to project into reality a kind of diachronic sameness that does not exist there at all.[8]

[7] See for example Meyer (2014: 146–147).

[8] See, for example, *KSA* 9:11[149], [153], [155], [156], [162], [184], [227], [228]. As a remedy, Nietzsche advises the improvement of the natural sciences through the methodological correction of

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Hence, if we want to gain insight into this reality, the best we can do is systematically subtract from our conception of reality as much of this projective error as possible. As we have seen, this is the kind of reasoning that Nietzsche proposes in *Zarathustra*. So it is not the case, as many scholars assume, that Nietzsche begins by assuming the self-evident reality of radical flux and then rejects our concepts of diachronic sameness because they *falsify* this reality. Instead, he begins by systematically criticizing all these concepts of diachronic sameness as involving projective error, until eventually – through a kind of extrapolated *via negativa* – he arrives at the reality of universal, eternal and absolute diachronic change.

In the "Redemption" chapter that is placed halfway through the book, Zarathustra delivers a speech that identifies this reality as the source of the most difficult existential problem facing humankind. The problem, he says, is that human beings (like all living creatures) strive to exert their power over everything they can but are unable to do so with respect to what lies in the past. Although he does not mention it here, Nietzsche's background assumption, which he emphasizes earlier in *HL* 2 and later in *GM* II:1–2, is that their mnemonic abilities allow humans to recognize a realm over which they have no control, that is, the realm of the past into which everything passes away. This feeling of impotence causes them great suffering and leads them to seek a displaced revenge wherever they can. When transposed into intellectual terms, these vengeful feelings drive them into thinking that they suffer in this way because they deserve it, that their existence is a kind of punishment, and that the only thing left for them to do is to stop trying to influence and control anything at all. According to Zarathustra, these are all insane and foolish responses to the problem posed by the reality of absolute diachronic change. What is needed instead, he implies, is a sane and wise response to this problem. It is thus his task to show how human beings can find redemption, salvation, or liberation from the flux of things (*die Erlösung vom Fluss der Dinge*) and in this way be rid of their feelings of impotence and vengefulness. The proper solution, he says, would be to teach them how they can feel in control of their remembered past despite the irreversible forward direction of time. And the key to doing this, he explains next, is his

their anthropomorphic projective errors, as for example with Boscovich's replacement of material atoms with centers of dynamic force (cf. *BGE* 12, *KSA* 11:26[410, 432]; Letter to Köselitz, March 20 1882, *KSB* 6: 183–184). Indeed, Nietzsche argues, de-anthropomorphism has always been the essence of the scientific method, but up to now it has not been deliberately, systematically, or comprehensively applied.

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discovery that all absolute diachronic change is identically and eternally repeating.

6.2 Eternal Repetition

Nietzsche includes strong intimations of the doctrine of eternal recurrence at the end of Part II of *Zarathustra*, but it is only in Part III that he offers a full and explicit treatment of this doctrine. In fact, Nietzsche shows Zarathustra unveiling this doctrine in just the same place where he most fully asserts the reality of universal, eternal, and absolute diachronic change—in the chapter entitled "On the Vision and the Riddle." Nietzsche's basic reasoning here is quite simple and is one that he repeatedly invokes in his notes from 1881 until the end of his career. If we assume that an eternity lies in the past, then it must be the case that all possible changes have already occurred. Thus, any change we are observing at this present moment must have already happened at some point in the eternal past. Now, since any change is by definition a coming to be and passing away, it follows that whatever passed away during that change in the eternal past must have come back into being during this present moment. Hence, we can also infer that whatever is passing away during the change we are observing in the present moment will eventually come back into being at some point in the future. And since this general argument can be recursively applied, it follows that all change is eternally recurring. As an example, Zarathustra cites the present moment in which he is whispering this proof to his archenemy: this event must have happened already in the eternal past and hence must happen again in the future, and eternally so.

6.2.1 Qualitative Identity

Nietzsche's reasoning becomes more complex when we consider more closely his associated ideas about identity and temporality. In the first place, he insists that the recurring changes in the eternal past, in the present moment, and in the future, are all identically the same. But the sense of identity he has in mind cannot be numerical, since by definition these changes all involve a coming back into existence (*Wiederkehr*, *Wiederkunft*) of that which has passed away.[9] Instead, then, he has to

[9] Nietzsche's frequent use of the term "repetition" (*Wiederholung*) to describe his doctrine (cf. *EH BT*:3) also rules out numerical identity. Moreover, Nietzsche's claim in *JS* 341 and in *Z*:III "Convalescent" that

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mean qualitative identity, and this means that he denies Leibniz's principle of the identity of indiscernibles. Or rather, he claims that the truth of cosmological eternal recurrence shows that reality does not conform to this logical principle.

Second, there is the question of when exactly these recurring changes happen in relation to each other. The usual interpretation is that Nietzsche thinks there are sequential cycles located in some kind of absolute or substantival time wherein the recurring changes follow each other by vast periods of intervening time.[10] So, for example, the idea would be that Zarathustra's encounter with his archenemy in the present moment has already happened eons earlier and must happen again eons later, and so on. In terms of the Stoic terminology that Nietzsche himself introduces in the "Convalescent" chapter, the idea is that this encounter has already happened one "great year" earlier in absolute time and must happen again one "great year" later in absolute time, and so on. However, this cannot be right because it would mean that the recurring changes are not qualitatively identical after all, since they would be differentiated by their sequential positions in absolute time. Also, Nietzsche is clear throughout his career that he dismisses the concept of absolute time as an anthropomorphic projective error.

So it must be the case instead that the recurring changes are synchronic, that is, they all happen at the same time. Again, however, this sameness has to mean qualitative identity, not numerical identity. For the temporal moments in which the changes happen are also changing and recurring in the sense that they themselves come back into existence after they have passed away. Moreover, it would be a contradiction to say that numerically distinct temporal moments – the moment in the eternal past, the present moment, and the moment in the future – are numerically identical.[11] But what does it mean to say that numerically distinct temporal moments are qualitatively identical?[12] Since there is no absolute time, this can only

everything must be repeated in exactly the same way down to the smallest detail only makes sense if he has qualitative identity in mind. In an important preparatory note for the "Convalescent" chapter, Zarathustra explicitly excludes numerical identity when he says that his doctrine "has not yet been taught on earth: that is, on this particular earth and in this particular great year" (*KSA* 11:25[7], *CWFN* [2021: 5]). For further discussion, see Loeb (2022).

[10] See, for example, Soll (1973: 322, 332, 340); Magnus (1978: 191); Clark (1990: 266–270); Reginster (2006: 211); Ure (2019: 193–196); Richardson (2020: 511 n. 94).

[11] See for example Gooding-Williams (2001: 218).

[12] Thus, contrary to Leibniz and those who follow his lead, Nietzsche's doctrine of eternally recurring qualitative identity includes what are now called "extrinsic" properties just as much as "intrinsic" properties (a distinction which is excluded by Nietzsche's metaphysics of relational forces). See Loeb (2018) for an extended textual analysis of this point with respect to temporal moments. Also, in the "Convalescent" chapter Zarathustra says that he must return to the identical spatial location (this sun, this

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mean that they have identical relations to other moments in time. Thus, if the present moment is located exactly halfway through the sequence of moments that constitute one great year, then the moment that has already happened must be located exactly halfway through its respective great year, and the moment that returns in the future must be located exactly halfway through its respective great year. And of course these great years must all be qualitatively identical to each other in the sense that they are constituted of exactly the same vast number of temporal moments that are arranged in exactly the same succession and sequence. In sum, all these recurring moments share the qualitatively identical location in each of the qualitatively identical great-year cycles and are for that reason not occurring at any differentiating earlier or later positions in some kind of absolute time.

6.2.2 Circular Time

Here, then, we arrive at the part of Nietzsche's formulation that is the most difficult, obscure, and controversial – both exegetically and philosophically. Up to this point in his career Nietzsche had believed that all change happens in linear time. So here he constructs Zarathustra's proof of eternal recurrence in such a way that we are led to understand his shift to a new conception of circular time. Thus, he begins by telling his archenemy that there is an eternal duration in each of the two lanes that meet and contradict each other inside the gateway. He also tells him that no one has traveled either of these lanes to the end, but then asks him what would happen if someone did travel much further down either one of the lanes. Would the two lanes eternally contradict each other? His implication is that there is actually some point incredibly far away from the gateway where they no longer contradict each other. This is because the lanes curve around and join together to form a single circular running lane – or as he elsewhere calls it, a circular course (*Kreislauf*) – that is enormous but still finite in extent and that starts and finishes at the same place. In response, Zarathustra's archenemy murmurs contemptuously: all that is straight lies, all truth is bent, time itself is a circle. Nietzsche's point here, usually lost on commentators, is that this response does indeed confirm what Zarathustra was implying. The only reason Zarathustra rejects this response is that he thinks his archenemy, the spirit of gravity, is making things too easy for

earth), thus ruling out Georg Simmel's famous analogy of recurrence-duplicates living in qualitatively identical but spatially distant worlds (Simmel 1920:246; see also Magnus 1978: 191; and Clark 1990: 268). Thanks to Scott Jenkins for his question on these issues.

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himself – or quite literally, too light (*leicht*), too weightless. What he means by this is that his archenemy's contemptuous attitude, and the language he uses, show that he is trying to avoid being crushed by the weight of thinking his own eternal recurrence. He is doing so by adopting a God's-eye transcendent perspective that is contemptuous of all immanent reality. This is the kind of perspective which, as we have seen from the "Blessed Isles" chapter, involves the claim that time does not really exist and that everything impermanent is actually a lie. Yes, the dwarf agrees, the time of immanent reality is circular, but this does not bother him because he believes that time does not exist in the true world of the one, the plenum, the unmoved, and the everlasting.[13]

There is also strong further evidence that Zarathustra is endorsing the view that time is a circle, despite his rejection of his archenemy's mouthing of this view. By contrast with his archenemy, Zarathustra presents himself as an advocate of the circle when he is calling forth his thought of eternal recurrence (*Z*:III "Convalescent" 1); he proclaims his love of the ring of rings, the ring of eternal recurrence (*Z*:III "Seven Seals"); and he is stung by the thought of the golden round ring (*Z*:IV "Noon"). In addition, Zarathustra says that every ring strives and turns to reach itself once again (*Z*:II "On the Virtuous"); and he whispers to the superior men about the ring's will wrestling in the joy that wants itself, that bites into itself (*Z*:IV "Sleepwalker's Song" 11). Similarly, Zarathustra's animals sing about the bent path of eternity, about the wheel of being that rolls eternally, and about the ring of being that remains eternally loyal to itself (*Z*:III "Convalescent" 1). And Nietzsche himself, when writing in his own voice in the books that came after *Zarathustra*, explains eternal recurrence with the concept of a *circulus vitiosus deus* (*BGE* 56) and defines it as the unconditioned and infinitely repeated circulation of all things (*EH* BT:3). Even in the unpublished notes that seem intended just for his own consumption, Nietzsche repeatedly writes about the flux of things turning back into itself and constantly refers to eternal recurrence as a circular process. Perhaps the clearest evidence is this note, written shortly after discovering his thought of eternal recurrence, in which he describes the law of the circle as a primordial law that has always existed and that applies without exception to everything that is ever-changing within the circle:

> Let us beware of ascribing to this circulation any kind of striving, any kind of goal; or of assessing it, in keeping with our needs, as boring, stupid, etc.

[13] For more support of this reading, see Loeb (2010: 45–84).

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> Certainly it includes the highest degree of irrationality just as much as the opposite: but it is not to be measured according to this, rationality or irrationality are not predicates for the universe. Let us beware of thinking of the law of this circle as having come into being, in keeping with the false analogy of circular motion within the ring: there was not a chaos in the first place and afterward, gradually, a more harmonious and finally a fixed circular movement of all forces: rather, everything is eternal, not having come into being: if there was a chaos of forces, then the chaos too was eternal and recurred in every ring. The circulation is not something that has come into being, it is the primordial law, just as the amount of force is the primordial law, without exception and without violation. All becoming is within the circulation and the amount of force; therefore the circulations that come into being and pass away, e.g. the stars or ebb and flood day and night seasons, are not to be applied by false analogy as characteristics of the eternal circulation. (KSA 9:11[157]; see also *KSA* 9:11[225])

Let us suppose, then, that Zarathustra's exposition in the "Vision and Riddle" chapter is supposed to show that eternal recurrence requires a circular conception of time. Why does Nietzsche think this is the case? The answer, again, has to do with identity and temporality. Even if we leave aside the idea of time as absolute, a relational time that is linear still excludes the possibility of qualitative identity among recurring changes. This is because the only way to make sense of the idea of a series of recurring great-year cycles in an infinitely extending straight linear time is to think of them as qualitatively different from each other in terms of their *sequential place* in this linear time. And this difference will ensure that the recurring moments, despite their identical locations within their respective great-year cycles, will still be qualitatively different. For example, since the sequential order of the great years is fixed and invariable, any moment in the great year *preceding* our own great year cannot be identical to the recurring moment in the year *following* our great year. This is a perfectly general argument that can be applied to any moments at all anywhere in the entire chain of moments that constitutes any great-year cycle. And if no recurring moments can be qualitatively identical, then neither can any recurring changes that happen in these recurring moments. Hence, given a linear conception of relational time, eternal recurrence is impossible.

By contrast, if we assume a relational time that is circular, there is still a fixed and invariant sequence of great-year cycles. But now each great-year cycle begins and ends with a full circular rotation. This means that all the great-year cycles are exactly superimposed on each other and, consequently, that all the moments that constitute each great-year cycle are

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always in exactly the same position on the circle.[14] Hence, all the recurring moments are qualitatively identical in every way, which means that all the recurring changes that happen in these recurring moments can be qualitatively identical.[15] Some scholars have argued that this conception is incoherent because it covertly presupposes a linear time in which we are keeping track of all the completed circular rotations.[16] But this objection ignores Nietzsche's insistence that the moments of time come into being only within the circle itself and that there is no God's-eye point of view from which to view these moments outside the circle. Moreover, these immanent moments of time within the circle itself cannot be used to keep track of any completed circular rotations. This is because there is a finite number of such moments in any great year and the last of these moments at the end of each completed rotation is followed by a recurring first moment at the start of each new rotation.[17] In other words, time is restarted at the end of each great year and therefore cannot be used to measure any accumulation of great years. It is certainly true that these great-year cycles, as recorded by completed rotations around the circle, are numerically distinct (otherwise they would not be recurring), but this does not entail that they are temporally distinct (see Loeb 2022).

One helpful way to track Nietzsche's shift in thinking from linear time to circular time is to compare this account with his earlier discussion of the Pythagorean doctrine of eternal recurrence (*HL* 2). Using the now controversial example of Columbus' discovery of America, Nietzsche explains that the Pythagoreans believed in the following idea. Whenever the stars in the heavens stand in an identical configuration, the event of Columbus' discovery is identically repeated on earth, down to the most individual and most minute detail. The earth, he writes, always begins its theatrical play all over again after the final act, and the event of Columbus' discovery

[14] In Loeb (2018), I argue that this means that every moment is "colossal" (*ungeheuer*) in the sense that it must contain within itself its own infinite repetition.

[15] In his attempt to refute Nietzsche's proof of cosmological eternal recurrence, Welshon finally concedes that Nietzsche's assumption of circular recurring time is sufficient to sustain this proof, but then simply claims that "rejecting the linearity of time is an extraordinarily high price to pay, and there is no reason, either philosophical or scientific, for paying it" (2004: 185).

[16] See for example Small (2010: 140).

[17] Notice that there are also a finite number of moments in each completed great year segment of *linear* time. There is no contradiction between this finitude and the premise of infinite time in Nietzsche's proof of eternal recurrence (see Section 6.2.4). This is because the moments will simply keep coming into existence as needed until all the (finite number of) possible combinations have been realized – after which the moments and the combinations start repeating. There is no pre-existing substantival container of infinite moments waiting to be filled in with possible combinations. Thanks to Ian Dunkle for this question.

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identically recurs at those fixed intervals in which there is a return of the identical constellation of celestial bodies. Here, then, is Nietzsche's presentation of a theory of eternal recurrence that presupposes a temporality that is both absolute and linear. Time is absolute because it is determined by the positions of the stars and, according to the Pythagoreans, these stars are unchangeable and endure forever. And time is linear because the fixed intervals of time that separate the identical reconfigurations of the stars are sequentially fixed in an infinitely extending straight line. However, from Nietzsche's later and more careful perspective, this means that Columbus' discovery of America is *not* identically repeated down to the most individual and most minute detail. If we suppose that the stars return to their configurations every great year, then the last time Columbus discovered America in 1492 is one great year earlier in the expanse of absolute time recorded by enduring existence of the stars. So his discovery in that earlier great year is not temporally identical to his discovery in our current great year. Moreover, since the last time Columbus discovered America has to precede but not follow our own historical era, while the next time has to follow but not precede our own historical era, it turns out that these recurring events cannot be temporally identical.

6.2.3 Negative Cosmology

In Nietzsche's view, then, previous theories of eternal recurrence, such as that of the Pythagoreans, did not actually entail that all changes are identically repeated.[18] This is because they presupposed a conception of time as linear rather than circular. Supposing this is right, we still need to ask what are Nietzsche's reasons for thinking that all changes are indeed identically repeated. A lot of ink has been spilled on this question, most of it having to do with the proofs Nietzsche outlined in his notebooks, and most of it concluding – in line with Georg Simmel's alleged refutation – that these proofs are inadequate. The problem is that all this discussion simply omits to mention the methodological argument that Nietzsche offered in his first published unveiling of his theory in Section 109 of *The Joyful Science*. This argument provides crucial context for the proofs that Nietzsche outlines in his notes and shows why Simmel's alleged refutation does not work.

Immediately following his announcement at the start of Book III that the Christian God has become unbelievable (*JS* 108, 343), Nietzsche

[18] For further discussion, see Loeb (2021b).

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proceeds in *JS* 109 to outline a new methodological argument for dispelling all the remnants of this belief. Because he thinks that this belief in God is an enormous projective error that has led us to anthropomorphize the cosmos as a whole, his new method consists in a systematic identification and withdrawal of all the remnants of this projective error (which he calls "the shadows of God"). The result, he says, is that none of our aesthetic and moral judgments apply to the cosmos a whole – which we now discover to be "in all eternity chaos, in the sense not of a lack of necessity but of a lack of order, arrangement, form, beauty, wisdom, and whatever other names there are for our aesthetic anthropomorphisms" (*JS* 109). More specifically, Nietzsche argues, we will no longer anthropomorphically believe that the cosmos as a whole has a purpose or is constructed for a purpose, that it is rational, or that it obeys any laws. Also, we will no longer believe, from a biomorphic standpoint, that the whole cosmos is like an organism or living creature that is expanding and growing, that it has an instinct for self-preservation, or that it has a cycle of birth and death. And finally, we will stop geocentrically projecting into this whole cosmos the unique astral order in which we live, and we will no longer posit generally and everywhere anything as exceptional as the cyclical movements of our neighboring stars.[19]

In *JS* 109, then, Nietzsche describes what might be called a negative cosmology, meaning that which is left over after all the remnants of the deifying projective error have been withdrawn from our concept of the cosmos as a whole. At the very end of his list of remnants, however, Nietzsche singles out two more such errors that turn out to be essential to his new doctrine of eternal recurrence. These are the ideas that the world eternally creates new things and that there are eternally enduring substances (such as matter or atoms).[20] Both of these ideas are "shadows of God": the first derives from the theological assumption of a boundlessly creative divine force, and the second derives from the theological assumption of an eternally enduring divine substance. We have already seen how Nietzsche thinks that the second of these errors also depends upon the projective error of diachronic sameness and that withdrawing this error

[19] This new method should not be interpreted as part of the ascetic ideal whereby humankind belittles itself and displaces itself from the center (*GM* III: 25). To the contrary: by teaching humankind how to reclaim the value-creating powers it had erroneously projected into anthropomorphic divinities, or into the world as a whole, this method actually enhances humankind's pride and self-esteem (*GS* 301) and is therefore a strong weapon against the ascetic ideal. Thanks to Matthew Meyer for this question.

[20] Nietzsche includes atoms in his preparatory note (*KSA* 14:254).

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unveils a reality of universal, eternal, and absolute diachronic change. However, his criticism of the first of these projective errors, eternal novelty, leads him to say something completely new about this reality of change and becoming, namely, that it is eternally repeated. This is why he says, just a little bit earlier, that judged from the standpoint of reason the whole music box eternally repeats its tune, a tune which may never be called a melody. This is a metaphorical expression of his cosmological doctrine of the eternal recurrence of the same.[21] It is the same doctrine that he invokes by name a little later when he writes in *JS* 285 that the man of renunciation will desire the eternal recurrence of war and peace.[22] And it is the same cosmological doctrine that he invokes just a little later still when he has a demon reveal in *JS* 341, just prior to Zarathustra's entrance in *JS* 342, that the hourglass of existence is turned over again and again. Of course, we can immediately notice the anthropocentric character of these images of a music box, war and peace, and the hourglass. So it might seem that this theory is hardly the result of applying the new methodological argument Nietzsche has outlined here. However, Nietzsche is careful to emphasize, against the Pythagoreans, that the actual "music" of the cosmos can never be called harmonious. Moreover, as we will see next, this objection misunderstands the way in which Nietzsche, like his mentor Heraclitus, is using these images to convey a radically de-anthropomorphic vision of the cosmos as a whole.

6.2.4 Nietzsche's Proof

In *JS* 109 Nietzsche does not explicitly say that his new cosmological doctrine of eternal recurrence is true. Nor does he offer a proof in support of this doctrine, if by this we mean a deductive account offered independently of the methodological argument I have just outlined. Nevertheless, if we look at the context that he provides for this key sentence and for this section, and also the contemporaneous notes that extend what he says in this section, we can see that he has both of these in mind. Having outlined all the dispelled cosmological remnants of our belief in the Christian God, Nietzsche ends *JS* 109 by saying that matter, regarded as an eternally enduring substance, is as much of an error as the God of the Eleatics. This

[21] See D'Iorio (2014) for a detailed analysis of Nietzsche's preparatory notes for *JS* 109. In these notes, Nietzsche asserts his own cosmological theory of eternal recurrence in opposition to the well-known cosmological theories of his contemporaries such as Vogt, Caspari, Hartmann, Dühring, and Thomson.

[22] For a further discussion of *JS* 285, see Loeb (2021b).

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point already suggests that he thinks that the result of correcting this error is the discovery of truth. And, indeed, in the last sentence of *JS* 109 Nietzsche suggests that our de-deification of nature unveils a pure, newly discovered, newly redeemed nature. At the very start of the next section (*JS* 110), he then mentions what he has just said at the end of *JS* 109. He argues that in the past the human intellect had been producing and incorporating nothing but species-preserving projective errors, such as the anthropomorphic idea that there are changeless and enduring things, substances, and bodies. It is only very recently, he says, that such propositions have been denied and doubted in order that the truth might emerge. Thus, the question and the experiment today, he suggests, just as he did in his very first unpublished note about eternal recurrence (*KSA* 9:11[141]), is to what extent can we incorporate the truth of our new discoveries – that is, the discoveries about the cosmos as a whole that we have just made through the application of our new methodological argument. Since one such discovery is the identical and eternal repetition of all absolute diachronic change, it is clear that he is proposing the truth of this cosmological theory.[23]

As for the question of Nietzsche offering a proof for this theory, we need to look more closely now at the context of the sentence in which he introduces his image of the whole music box that eternally repeats its non-melodic tune. From a rational standpoint, he writes, *die verunglückten Würfe* are by far the rule, and the exceptions to this rule are not the secret aim, and even that phrase is already an anthropomorphism that includes a reproach – as if we could reproach the whole cosmos. Following Kaufmann, this German phrase is usually translated as "unsuccessful attempts."[24] However, the literal meaning that Nietzsche uses elsewhere is bad or unlucky throws of the dice, which means that the exceptions to this rule would be good or lucky throws of the dice. This meaning also makes more sense when we notice that Nietzsche's preparatory note for *JS* 109, in which he uses the same German phrase, does not mention the music box, but rather says, more naturally, that the whole game eternally repeats itself (*die ganze Spiel wiederholt sich ewig*) (*KSA* 14:254). His

[23] The prevalent interpretation today claims that Nietzsche's published presentations of eternal recurrence are only concerned with a counterfactual thought experiment that can be used to test and enhance our ability to affirm life (cf. Anderson 2017). But see Loeb (2013, 2018) for an exegetical refutation of this claim. Also, Nietzsche's two conditions for life-affirmation are that we must affirm life as it actually is and that we must affirm life's eternal repetition. The only way both these conditions can be met is if life actually does eternally repeat. See Loeb (2013: 662–669) and Loeb (2022).

[24] See *JS* (1974), (2001), (2019), and (forthcoming).

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language here thus recalls his argument against the Pythagorean doctrine of eternal recurrence in his early essay on history: "the true historical connexus of causes and effects, once completely known, would only prove that nothing wholly identical could ever again be produced by the dice game of the future and of chance (*dem Würfelspiele der Zukunft und des Zufalls*)" (*HL* 2). What he meant by this is that the Pythagoreans were relying on a false astrological story of deterministic causes and effects, but that a true historical account of causes and effects would reveal the role of chance in preventing any future identical repetition. In *JS* 109, Nietzsche keeps his image of the dice game and in that way continues to insist on the essential role played by chance in the unfolding of historical change. But he no longer believes that this chance factor is enough to keep the whole game from identically repeating itself. As we have seen, he now thinks that this belief is actually derived from the background theological idea of a boundlessly creative divine force. Indeed, in a very helpful note from 1885, Nietzsche explains that it is only this religious assumption that has kept us from recognizing the scientific truth that all change is identically and eternally repeating:

> [T]he world has no goal, no final state, and is incapable of being. But the old habit of thinking about all events in terms of goals, and about the world in terms of a guiding, creative God, is so powerful that a thinker has to make an effort not to fall back into thinking of the very aimlessness of the world as intention. This notion that therefore the world intentionally *avoids* a goal and even knows artifices for keeping itself from entering into a circulation must occur to all those who would like to find in the world a capacity for *eternal novelty*, that is, to find in a finite, definite force of unchanging magnitude as is 'the world,' the miraculous capacity for an *infinitely* novel refashioning of its forms and states. The world, even if it is no longer a god, is still supposed to be capable of a divine creative force, of an infinite transformative force; it is supposed to deliberately *prevent* itself from returning to one of its old forms, it is supposed to have not only the intention, but also the *means* of *guarding* itself from every repetition, to that end, it is supposed to *control* each of its movements at every moment so as to escape goals, final states, repetitions and whatever else may follow from such an inexcusably insane way of thinking and desiring. This is still the old religious way of thinking and desiring, a kind of longing to believe that *in some way or other* the world is after all the same as the old beloved, infinite, boundlessly creative God that in some way or other "the old God still lives" after all that longing of Spinoza's which was expressed with the phrase "*deus sive natura*" (he even felt "*natura sive deus*"). But what, then, is the principle and belief that most clearly formulates the decisive turning point, the now attained *upper hand* of the scientific mind over the

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> religious mind that invents gods? Is it not: the world, as force, may not be conceived as unlimited, for it *cannot* be so conceived we forbid ourselves the concept of an *infinite* force as something that is *incompatible with the concept "force."* Therefore the world also lacks the capacity for eternal novelty. (*KSA* 11:36[15])[25]

Returning, then, to his image of the dice game, and leaving aside this "shadow of God," Nietzsche approaches the end of his philosophical career in 1888 with the following deductive proof of eternal recurrence:

> If the world *may* be thought of as a determinate magnitude of force and as a determinate number of centers of force and every other idea remains indeterminate and therefore *useless* then it follows that, in the great dice game of its existence [*im grossen Würfelspiel ihres Dasein*], it must pass through a calculable number of combinations. In an infinite time, every possible combination would at some time or another have been realized; what is more, it would be have been realized an infinite number of times. And since between every "combination" and its next "return" all other possible combinations must have come and gone, and each of these combinations conditions the entire sequence of combinations in the same series, a circula tion of absolutely identical series is thus demonstrated: the world as a circulation that has already repeated itself infinitely often and plays its game in infinitum [*der sein Spiel in infinitum spielt*]. (*KSA* 13:14[188])[26]

6.2.5 Simmel's Refutation

Although Nietzsche's *Nachlass* includes many iterations of his proof of eternal recurrence, this is probably the most famous one. This is probably because early in the history of Nietzsche reception Georg Simmel targeted this specific proof for refutation in the only footnote included in his book on Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Here is how Simmel introduces this footnote: "Even if we wanted to admit that the world-process takes place in infinite time among finite elements, then it is by no means proven that a configuration of these elements, once established, must repeat itself at some point, even in infinite time; this can of course be the case, but a combination of the cosmic elements is conceivable in which it does not take place" (Simmel [1920]: 246n., my translation). In this footnote

[25] For Nietzsche's first, and less systematic and complete, unpublished presentations of this methodological argument, see *KSA* 9:11[245], 11[292], 11[312], and 11[345].

[26] For Nietzsche's first unpublished presentations of this proof of eternal recurrence having to do with finite force and infinite time, see *KSA* 9:11[148], [202], [232], [245], [269], [305]. For his published presentation of this proof, see *Z*:III: "On the Vision and the Riddle" 2 and Loeb (2018).

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Simmel then offers his famous thought experiment of three wheels of equal size, all aligned on a straight line at the start, but then each set into rotation at a different speed around the same axle. Since Simmel stipulates that the rotation speed of each of these three wheels is n, 2n, and $1/\pi$, he concludes that, due to the nature of the number π, the aligned starting position of the three wheels can never be repeated. Hence, he writes, "the possibility just sketched is sufficient by itself to render this so-called proof of the eternal return of the same an illusion."

Over a century after Simmel first published this discussion, scholars still keep citing this refutation as reason to dismiss Nietzsche's proof of his doctrine. But I hope it is obvious from the summary I have given above that this thought experiment, in assuming that the wheels are rotating independently of each other at different speeds, simply leaves out of consideration Nietzsche's crucial assumption that the cosmic dice throws are all necessarily connected. More importantly, this thought experiment leaves out of consideration Nietzsche's background methodological argument for thinking that there must be such a necessary connection – namely, his new de-deified and de-anthropomorphic conception of the cosmos as a whole. Instead of Nietzsche's ceaselessly fluctuating centers of force, Simmel imagines enduring substances (the wheels) in an initial, static and identical position (the starting alignment of all the wheels); instead of Nietzsche's dynamic struggles among these forces, Simmel imagines a permanent and stable configuration of enduring substances (the wheels all turning together on the same axle); instead of Nietzsche's completely relational and interdependent existence of these forces, Simmel imagines the causally independent movement of these enduring substances (the rotation of the wheels at different speeds); instead of Nietzsche's self-subsisting and purposeless cosmos as a whole, Simmel imagines a human mind setting up and conducting an experiment; and, finally, instead of Nietzsche's eternal law of the circle that guides the cosmos as a whole, Simmel imagines merely the intermittent circular physical motion of an element within this cosmos. More generally, instead of chaos and a game of dice, Simmel imagines order, reason, and purpose; instead of absolute necessity, he imagines the conditional laws of mathematics and physics; instead of flux, forces, and contest, he imagines permanence, enduring substances, and equilibrium; and instead of eternal identical repetition, he imagines eternally created novelty. We can see, then, why Nietzsche might respond that Simmel is still being guided by an unwitting and ulterior theological motive that deifies the cosmos as a whole – that is, by humankind's enormous projective errors of anthropocentrism, biocentrism, and geocentrism.

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6.3 Redemption from Eternal Flux

I want to return now to the question why Nietzsche thinks that the eternal repetition of all radical flux (as demonstrated in the "Vision and Riddle" chapter of *Zarathustra*), solves the existential problem of radical flux (as presented in the "Redemption" chapter of *Zarathustra*). This problem, as we saw, has to do with the human capacity for memory – or, as Nietzsche later formulated it, the human ability to suspend its active faculty of forgetting (*GM* II:1–3). Human beings, in contrast with other animals (*HL* 1), are able to use their mnemonic abilities to recognize radical flux. Or rather, they are able to suspend their active forgetting of this radical flux. What this means is that they are able to notice that whatever they are experiencing in the present moment is constantly passing away and going out of existence. But since they remember what has passed away, they have access to the realm of the past, or as Zarathustra calls it, the "it was."[27] Like all other animals, humans want to control everything around them, but unlike other animals, they are able to notice a vast area of their experience that they cannot control because it no longer exists. This leads them to feel impotent, which in turn leads them to feel vengeful, which ultimately leads them to become sick and suicidal. Because they can remember the non-existent past over which they have no control, human animals are the masters of self-destruction (*GM* III:13).

It should be no surprise, then, that Nietzsche's solution to this existential problem also has to do with the human capacity for memory. Since he takes himself to have discovered the truth of cosmic repetition, he believes that the same mnemonic abilities that lead human beings to recognize that everything passes away can also lead them to recognize that everything returns.[28] The more they suspend their forgetting of radical flux, the more they also suspend their forgetting of the eternal repetition of this radical flux. For example, while I am writing this sentence, my memory tells me that my thoughts are passing away and going out of existence into the realm of the past where it seems that I no longer have any control over them.[29] However, my memory also tells me that these thoughts are

[27] In *HL* 1 Nietzsche also uses this phrase, "*Es war*," to describe that problematic aspect of existence that humans encounter once they grow out of childhood and are called out of their state of forgetfulness.

[28] See Loeb (2010, 2013, 2015b) for an extended and detailed discussion of Nietzsche's narrative depiction of Zarathustra's memory of his life's eternal repetition.

[29] Nietzsche expresses something like this sentiment at the very end of *BGE*.

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qualitatively identical repetitions of the thoughts that I have already had at this same moment in every last great year.[30] As Nietzsche puts it in one of his preparatory notes for *Zarathustra*, "Do not fear the flux of things: this flux turns back into itself: it flees itself not just twice. / All 'it was' becomes an 'it is' again. The past bites all that is future in the tail" (*KSA* 10:4[85]; *CWFN* (2019): 121). In other words, although I am now recognizing that my thoughts are passing away into the realm of "it was," I am also recognizing that they have returned into the realm of "it is." Hence, in feeling the control I have right now over these thoughts, I am at the same time feeling empowered with respect to my qualitatively identical thoughts in the realm of "it was." And this means that I can say to these *past* thoughts not just "Thus I *willed* them!" but also "Thus I *will* them!" This is an instance of what Nietzsche calls "retrospective" or "backward" willing (*Zurückwollen*).[31] Further, since the truth of cosmic repetition ensures that I will be having these same thoughts again at this same moment in every next great year, I can also say right now to my *current* thoughts: "Thus I *shall* will them!" (*Z*:II "Redemption"; *Z*:III "Tablets" 3).

Nietzsche's solution to the existential problem of radical flux thus points the way toward his background resolution of the classic philosophical problem of change. This problem, as we saw, concerns the question as to how we are able to understand and explain a radical flux that does not allow any diachronic self-identity. If, for example, my thoughts while writing this sentence are not in any way the same from one moment to the next, how am I able to identify my thoughts before or after they change, much less re-identify them through the course of this change? Nietzsche's answer, again, is that I remember, or rather, stop forgetting, the cosmic repetition of these thoughts and of their change. Because each moment in time is identically repeated in every identical great year, along with any thought I might be having at that moment, I can use my memory to recognize this synchronic repetition.[32] Thus, my memory tells me that

[30] Simmel (1920: 246) also makes the influential objection that we cannot remember eternal repetition without this memory introducing a difference. But this objection begs the question by assuming that this memory is not itself an identical repetition of the memory in every preceding great year extending backward for all eternity (since there is no first or original great year). See Loeb (2010: 11–31).

[31] This does not mean changing the past (which Nietzsche thinks is impossible), but only having a retroactive influence on what the past unchangeably is. Nor does it mean merely reinterpreting the meaning of the past, which is the usual scholarly interpretation of these passages (cf. Anderson 2005, 2009; Richardson 2020: 514), or merely wanting the past to return (cf. Parkes 2005: 306; Jenkins 2020: 27, 36). For more discussion, see Loeb (2010: 17–206).

[32] In a couple of notes written shortly after discovering eternal recurrence (*KSA* 9:11[138, 293]), Nietzsche points out that human memory is based on seeing the same and taking things to be the

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my infinitely repeating thoughts at any given moment in time are synchronically self-identical.[33] This is how I actually identify my thoughts before and after they have changed. As for re-identifying my thoughts through the course of that change, the key point to notice is that after the change I have a memory of the synchronic self-identity of my thoughts as they were before the change. Thus, although there is nothing in the thoughts themselves that persists over time as they change, I myself have a memory of their synchronic repetition and this memory is what connects them for me through the course of their change.[34]

The shift in thought from Nietzsche's early essay on history is again instructive here. In that essay, where he had rejected the idea of eternal recurrence, Nietzsche had imagined "the most extreme example, a human being who does not possess the power to forget, who is condemned to see becoming everywhere." Such a person, he wrote, "would no longer believe in his own being, would no longer believe in himself, would see everything flow apart in turbulent particles, and would lose himself in this stream of becoming; like the true pupil of Heraclitus, in the end he would hardly even dare to lift a finger" (*HL* 1; *HL* [1995]: 89). But now, in his later *Zarathustra* book, which he considers his most important contribution to philosophy, Nietzsche has come to accept the idea of eternal recurrence and is able to propose a very different Heraclitean outcome:[35] "I teach you redemption from the eternal flux:[36] the flux flows back into itself again and

same, hence on seeing inaccurately. But here he has in mind the falsification of multiplicity and diachronic change, not the falsification of synchronic repetition.

[33] This is not the traditional logical and atemporal conception of synchronic self-identity that Nietzsche also rejects as an anthropomorphic projective error (*JS* 110–111, *BGE* 4). See Green (2002: 55–63, 85–94) and Meyer (2014: 80–83, 140–147) for further discussion.

[34] Notice that Nietzsche's definition of memory as the suspension of our usual active forgetting allows him to avoid the objection that the reality of radical flux prevents the formation of memory as some kind of persistent and stable trace. This is why Nietzsche says in *HL* 1 that the person with the most perfect memory, that is, no forgetting at all, would also have the most accurate perception of the reality of absolute flux.

[35] See Loeb (2021b) for a further discussion of Nietzsche's Heraclitean interpretation of eternal recurrence.

[36] Nietzsche includes the phrase "redemption from the flux of things" in the preaching that Zarathustra attributes to madness, but this does not mean he is saying that we must overcome our need for this redemption. Instead, Nietzsche repeats within this preaching all of his various formulations of the *problem* (everything passing away, the law of time that it must devour its children, the need for redemption from the flux of things, the immovability of the stone "it was," the impossibility of annihilating any deed) while at the same time emphasizing the insanity of all the Anaximandrian and Schopenhauerian *solutions* to this problem (everything *deserving* to pass away,

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again, and you step into the same flux again and again, as the same ones."[37]

6.4 Conclusion

Anyone who is moderately acquainted with Nietzsche's work knows that he is obsessed with change, becoming, flux, and transformation. If we had to choose one philosophical theme that runs throughout his career, from start to finish, it is his insistence on the pervasive and fundamental reality of change. What is less well-known, however, is his view that human beings find this reality deeply problematic. This is because he mostly emphasizes this view in his favorite book, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* – a book that is not taken very seriously by scholars since Nietzsche did not write it in his own voice. Even less well-known, and perhaps not understood at all, is his claim in this same book to have discovered the solution to this problem of change – namely, that all change is identically and eternally repeating. Thus, he argues, whereas human beings have always felt impotent with regard to everything they remember as having changed and passed away, they (or rather, their superhuman descendants) will feel empowered once they incorporate the cosmological truth that everything always comes back into existence in order to undergo an identical change. Although Nietzsche does not emphasize the point, this resolution is also relevant to the questions about change that philosophers have been posing since the time of the ancient Greeks. Writing against most of the tradition, Nietzsche insists that diachronic change is universal, eternal, and absolute – meaning that nothing ever persists through time. Whatever ideas philosophers have proposed as ensuring diachronic self-identity – including, for example, numerical identity, substance, matter, atoms, or even the self – Nietzsche rejects as projective errors (KSA 12:2[139]). But there is another possibility that he thinks philosophers have never considered, namely, that

the *justice* that is carried out when time devours its children, the idea of existence as eternal *punishment* for eternal *guilt*, and the *cessation* of willing). Thanks to Scott Jenkins for this question.

[37] *KSA* 10:5[1].160; *CWFN* (2019: 182). See also *KSA* 10: 4[76], *CWFN* (2019:118): "Redemption from the eternal flux." And *KSA* 10:4[94], *CWFN* (2019:124): "Do not forget this about me! I told h<umans> to create superhumans, I taught noon and eternity and redemption from flux [. . .]." Nietzsche's concluding qualification, "as the same ones" (*als die Gleichen*), points to his claim that the reality of eternal flux and eternal repetition includes personal identity: although we are constantly changing (cf. *HL* 1; *AOM* 223), we are also eternally recurring as the same (Z III: "The Convalescent" 2). See Loeb (2022) for further discussion.

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the whole cosmos eternally repeats itself in such a way that there is always a recurring synchronic self-identity in the midst of all the absolute diachronic change. According to Nietzsche, this is actually the truth and this is what allows human beings to understand their radically changing selves and the radically changing world around them.[38]

[38] Thanks to Keith Ansell-Pearson, Rebecca Bamford, Ian Dunkle, Scott Jenkins, Paul Katsafanas, Matthew Meyer, Mark Migotti, and Justin Remhoff for their helpful comments on this chapter.

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CHAPTER 7

Zarathustra's Moral Psychology

Neil Sinhababu

Nietzsche's moral psychology combines his radical criticisms of morality and his insightful psychological observations. He responds to Platonic and Kantian rationalist orthodoxy by arguing that passion, not reason, constitutes our selves and our virtues. Rationalism dominates contemporary moral psychology. Christine Korsgaard (1999, 2008, 2009) argues that treating all motivation as grounded in passion won't explain the self's role in action, and John McDowell (1998) argues that it won't explain the perceptual salience of moral considerations to the virtuous. Zarathustra anticipates Korsgaard and McDowell's influential arguments and shows why they fail.[1]

First I'll lay out this millennia-old historical debate. Then I'll locate Zarathustra's answer to Korsgaard in the chapter from Part I of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* entitled "On the Despisers of the Body" (henceforth "Despisers") and his answer to McDowell in the chapter from Part I of Zarathustra entitled "On Enjoying and Suffering the Passions" (henceforth "Passions").

7.1 Hume and Nietzsche against the Rationalist Tradition

David Hume in his *Treatise* (2000), describes the rationalist orthodoxy that he and Nietzsche oppose:

> Nothing is more usual in philosophy, and even in common life, than to talk of the combat of passion and reason, to give the preference to reason, and assert that men are only so far virtuous as they conform themselves to its dictates. Every rational creature, it is said, is obliged to regulate his actions by reason; and if any other motive or principle challenge the direction of his conduct, he ought to oppose it, till it be entirely subdued, or at least brought to a conformity with that superior principle. On this method of

[1] "*Zarathustra*" here refers to the book, "Zarathustra" to the character.

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> thinking the greatest part of moral philosophy, antient and modern, seems to be founded; nor is there an ampler field, as well for metaphysical arguments, as popular declamations, than this supposed pre eminence of reason above passion. The eternity, invariableness, and divine origin of the former have been displayed to the best advantage: The blindness, uncon stancy, and deceitfulness of the latter have been as strongly insisted on. In order to shew the fallacy of all this philosophy, I shall endeavour to prove first, that reason alone can never be a motive to any action of the will; and secondly, that it can never oppose passion in the direction of the will. (2000:2.3.3)[2]

My psychological terminology may require clarification. Hume uses "passion," also a translation for Nietzsche's *Leidenschaft*, where contemporary philosophers use "desire." These terms can refer to many things, including the motivational state with hedonic and attention-directing properties that I refer to here. In contemporary debates I use "desire," defining it to have many features Hume and Nietzsche attribute to passion, but here I use "passion" for continuity with the historical texts. Passions come in different emotional flavors. One is positive desire, which includes typical passions for food, sex, and victory. Thoughts of its satisfaction excite us, and thoughts of its frustration disappoint us. (In this paper "desire" refers only to positive desire.) Another is aversion, which includes typical passions for avoiding such things as death, public humiliation, and financial disaster. Thoughts of things we're averse to cause anxiety, and thoughts of avoiding them bring relief. Unifying desire and aversion is the Hedonic Aspect of passion: thoughts of what we want bring pleasures of excitement or relief, while thinking of not getting it brings displeasures of disappointment or anxiety.[3] I take *Trieb*, translated as "drive," to refer to a passion or a group of passions aiming at something relatively unified.[4] Whatever "reason" is, all agree that it can form beliefs.

The rationalist view Plato and Kant accept, which Hume and Nietzsche oppose, is that beliefs with normative content can determine our motivation without any help from antecedently-existing passions. This allows beliefs about the form of the good or the categorical imperative to motivate us. Humeans deny this, claiming that belief alone cannot motivate action

[2] Radcliffe (1999, 2015) provides a clear articulation of Hume's arguments for this view.

[3] More precisely, "Desire that E combined with increasing subjective probability of E or vivid sensory or imaginative representation of E causes pleasure roughly proportional to the desire's strength times the increase in probability or the vividness of the representation. (With decreasing subjective probability of E or vivid sensory or imaginative representation of not-E, it likewise causes displeasure)" (Sinhababu 2017: 28).

[4] Sinhababu (2018).

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or create new passions through reasoning.[5] This leaves no way for Kantian or Platonic reason to direct the goals of action. Passion is necessary for all motivation, and the only reasoning that creates passions is the instrumental sort, where passion for an end produces passion for a believed means.

Plato holds that if spirit and passion fail to obey reason, the soul lacks justice, the greatest virtue. He sees passions as virtuous only insofar as they obey reason.[6] Hume's immediate predecessors, Ralph Cudworth, Samuel Clarke, and John Balguy, emphasize another feature of Platonism. They hold that human reason has the power to grasp objective moral truths independently of sensory experience.[7] They regard morality and mathematics as realms of objective a priori facts, following Plato's picture of reason grasping the abstract form of the good and motivating us accordingly. Hume responds to Platonic ontology and epistemology with a naturalistic ontology and an empiricist epistemology.[8] He responds to rationalist moral psychology by arguing that passion determines the goals of action and that reason merely finds ways to achieve these goals – the Humean Theory.

If rationalist moral psychology has a greater advocate than Plato, it's Kant who argues that actions with moral worth are motivated entirely by reason's recognition of duty. Kant regards acts of will motivated by passion as heteronomous. Heteronomous willing cannot be free, rational, or morally worthy, unlike autonomous willing motivated by reason alone. This is why in the *Groundwork* Kant says of passions and other inclinations that it must "be the universal wish of every rational being to be altogether free from them" (1997: IV, 429). Here Kant reacts to the moral psychology of British sentimentalists like Hume, whose metaphysics and epistemology of causation famously roused him from his "dogmatic slumber."

Nietzsche explicitly opposes Kant and Plato's rationalist moral psychology on Humean grounds.[9] He describes Socrates and Plato as "innocently

[5] I formulate the Humean Theory in terms of two theses, with "A" for action, "E" for end, and "M" for means. First is the "Desire-Belief Theory of Action: One is motivated to A if and only if desire that E is combined with belief that one can raise E's probability by A-ing." Second is the "Desire-Belief Theory of Reasoning: Desire that M is created as the conclusion of reasoning if and only if the reasoning combines desire that E with belief that M would raise E's probability. It is eliminated as the conclusion of reasoning if and only if the reasoning eliminates such a combination" (Sinhababu 2018: 2). Desire thus directs all action, including all reasoning leading to action (this reasoning is about finding means to desired ends).

[6] Frede (2017). [7] Gill (2007).

[8] Beam (1996) and Kail (2009) note similarities between Nietzsche and Hume in these areas.

[9] Leiter discusses a "Humean Nietzsche ... who aims to explain morality naturalistically" (Leiter 2019: 6). The Humean Theory they share serves this ambition by showing how moral motivation is driven by passion rather than beliefs about non-natural moral facts.

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credulous in regard to that most fateful of prejudices, that profoundest of errors, that 'right knowledge must be followed by right action'" (*D* 116).[10] He rejects Kant's conception of affectless action driven by reason: "An action demanded by the instinct of life is proved to be *right* by the pleasure that accompanies it; yet this nihilist with his Christian dogmatic entrails considered pleasure an *objection*" (*A* 11). He criticizes both for developing the idea that motivation is generated by conscious rational deliberation rather than pre-existing passion: "The nonsense of the last idea was taught as 'intelligible freedom' by Kant – perhaps by Plato already" (*TI* "The Four Great Errors" 8).

Daybreak displays Nietzsche's Humean commitments. The lengthy discussions of human reason, love and hatred, and pride and humility in Hume's *Treatise* all conclude with sections arguing that animal reason, love and hatred, and pride and humility operate similarly. Nietzsche extends the thought: "The beginnings of justice, as of prudence, moderation, bravery—in short, of all we designate as the *Socratic virtues*, are *animal*: a consequence of that drive which teaches us to seek food and elude enemies [. . .] it is not improper to describe the entire phenomenon of morality as animal" (*D* 26). Where Hume argues that beliefs alone don't motivate action, Nietzsche claims that "The most confident knowledge or faith cannot provide the strength or the ability needed for a deed, it cannot replace the employment of that subtle, manyfaceted mechanism which must first be set in motion if anything at all of an idea is to translate itself into action" (*D* 22). Nietzsche's account of how we control strong drives is a brilliant development of the Humean position. Nietzsche argues that "in this entire procedure our intellect is only the blind instrument of another drive which is a rival of the drive whose vehemence is tormenting us" (*D* 109). While Kantians and Platonists take cases of self-control to show that we have a type of reason that is independent of our drives and can control them, Nietzsche says that:

> at bottom it is one drive which is complaining about another; that is to say: for us to become aware that we are suffering from the vehemence of a drive presupposes the existence of another equally vehement or even more vehement drive, and that a struggle is in prospect in which our intellect is going to have to take sides. (*D* 109)

Here Nietzsche suggests that drives explain what Kantians and Platonists call the effects of reason. As Nietzsche assigns drives the same properties as

[10] The following translations are used in this chapter: *D* (1997); *GM* (1989); *GS* (1974); *Z* (1954).

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Humean passions, he here develops the Humean position that passions drive all action, while reason has no independent motivational force. We might imagine Plato playing the opening against Hume for reason against passion, with Kant and Nietzsche taking over their respective sides of the chessboard for the middlegame. Nietzsche's moves go beyond Humean positions as middlegame tactics go beyond opening positions, making creative use of Humean resources to refute attacks from Kant and his rationalist followers.

How did Nietzsche come to share Hume's conception of how passion drives us? He seems to have regarded Hume only as the source of the epistemology and metaphysics that woke Kant from his dogmatic slumber. But it appears that he unwittingly absorbed Hume's practical philosophy from Schopenhauer, who regarded Hume highly and approached publishers with a proposal to translate his work into German. (Sadly for philosophy, Schopenhauer's book proposal was rejected. If you have had a book proposal rejected, you can still be a great philosopher.) When twenty-one-year-old Nietzsche read *The World as Will and Representation* with fascination, he encountered Schopenhauer's subjectivism about the good: "every good is essentially relative; for it has its essential nature only in its relation to a desiring will. Accordingly, absolute good is a contradiction" (1969: IV, 65).[11] Kantian and Platonic metaethical theories must deny Schopenhauer's claim, as they require goodness not grounded in passion, accessible only to reason. Hume articulates the similar subjectivist view that calling something evil merely means "you have a feeling or sentiment of blame from the contemplation of it. Vice and virtue, therefore, may be compared to sounds, colours, heat and cold, which, according to modern philosophy, are not qualities in objects, but perceptions in the mind" (2000: 3.1.1). The section is titled "Moral distinctions not derived from reason," and the opponents against whom Hume urges this subjectivism are the British Platonists who preceded him. Nineteenth-century citation practices may have kept Nietzsche from knowing that in appreciating Schopenhauer, he was appreciating Hume. But the Humean parts of Schopenhauer's work seem to have greatly attracted him. Nietzsche shares Schopenhauer's preference for explanations in terms of primal motivational forces rather than reason, and here Schopenhauer follows Hume.

[11] Spinoza and Hobbes have similar views. Hume was well-acquainted with both. As Brobjer (2008) describes, Nietzsche encountered Spinoza through secondary literature only in 1881 at age thirty-five, after reading Schopenhauer at twenty-one. Wherever one begins the chain of influence leading to Nietzsche's views of motivation, Hume is a likely link.

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To bring us to contemporary debates, I will present two of the most influential rationalist arguments in moral psychology – Korsgaard's argument that the Humean Theory cannot account for the self, and McDowell's argument that virtue requires responsiveness to objective reasons. Zarathustra anticipates both. I will outline his responses before exploring them deeply in the last two sections (7.2 and 7.3).

Korsgaard argues that the Humean Theory leaves it mysterious why our bodily movements are *our* actions, because it explains them in terms of passion rather than the self. "Self-Constitution in the Ethics of Plato and Kant" (1999, 2008) describes Hume's picture of passions pushing against each other to determine action as a "'Combat Model' of the soul" (2008: 133). She criticizes this model: "I think that there are a few questions Hume should have asked first, for the Combat Model makes very little sense" (2008: 100). "If the movement is to be assignable to the agent in the way that the idea of action requires, then the agent must be something over and above the forces working in her and on her, something that can intelligibly be said to determine herself to action" (2008: 134). Her criticism is that Hume leaves out the unified acting self that is the agent, only giving us a picture of the forces causing the action. And since action essentially involves a unified agent, how can this be action at all? This objection may originate with Kant, who uses "reason" and "alien influences" where Korsgaard uses "the agent" and "forces working in her and on her":

> Reason must regard itself as the author of its principles independently of alien influences; consequently, as practical reason or as the will of a rational being it must be regarded of itself as free, that is, the will of such a being cannot be a will of his own except under the idea of freedom, and such a will must in a practical respect thus be attributed to every rational being. (Kant 1997: IV, 448)

Many contemporary rationalists join her in this view. Jay Wallace (2013: 633) argues that the Humean theory "leaves no real room for genuine deliberative agency. Action is traced to the operation of forces within us, with respect to which we as agents are ultimately passive, and in a picture of this kind real agency seems to drop out of view." Korsgaard (2009: 135) offers a further argument that passion cannot constitute agents: if mere parts of the self like passion drive our actions, we cannot "explain how an agent achieves the kind of unity that makes it possible to attribute her movements to her as their author."

In *Humean Nature* (2017), I respond that the passions are the self's motivational parts. This thesis, called Humean Self-Constitution, entails

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that actions caused by passion are caused by parts of the self.[12] So passion motivating action is the self-motivating action. Korsgaard's unity requirement fails to explain how half-hearted, reluctant, and akratic people can be genuine agents despite their disunity. Early chapters of *Humean Nature* build up to an argument for Humean Self-Constitution, explaining how passion shapes our pleasant and unpleasant emotions, and therefore our value judgments (via its Hedonic Aspect). They also explain how passion shapes our reasoning by directing our attention toward its objects (which I call its Attentional Aspect).[13] As *Humean Nature* defends the Humean Theory of Motivation, it argues that passion explains our actions as well. Thus, if the nature of one's self is supposed to explain such things as the nature of one's emotions, value judgments, attention, reasoning, and motivation, the passions must be parts of the self. They explain what the self is supposed to explain, empirically revealing they are parts of the self. So to treat passion as driving action is to give the self its place in action.

Zarathustra's arguments in "Despisers" convinced me of Humean Self-Constitution before I read Hume or any contemporary Humeans. Zarathustra succinctly and poetically makes the same explanatory argument I offer in *Humean Nature*. He shows that regarding the self as constituted by passion will explain not only how we're motivated, but how we think and feel. In Zarathustra's words, the "self" tells the "ego" "Feel pain here!" and "Feel pleasure here!" explaining the ego's "respect and contempt" and "why it is made to think." As Section 7.2 discusses, "Despisers" describes how passion's Hedonic and Attentional Aspects explain emotion and rational thought, including the reasoning and value judgments expressive of human selfhood. It also describes how acting selves can be disunified, rejecting Korsgaard's unity requirement. I could not properly credit Nietzsche for this in *Humean Nature*, as interpreting "Despisers" requires considerable work. Here I can do so.

McDowell argues that virtuous people recognize moral reasons for action by using a perceptual capacity that is independent of passion. Where Hume likens human psychology to animal psychology and

[12] Officially, "Agents are constituted in part by all of their desires, and aren't constituted by any other motivational states" (Sinhababu 2017: 167). This makes desire the only motivational part of the self. It allows the self to have other non-motivational parts, including belief. This follows Hume's view that the self is "nothing but a bundle or collection of different perceptions, which succeed each other with an inconceivable rapidity, and are in a perpetual flux and movement" (2000: 1.4.6). Zarathustra develops this Humean view to address motivation.

[13] "Desire that E disposes one to attend to things one associates with E, increasing with the desire's strength and the strength of the association" (Sinhababu 2017: 33).

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Nietzsche describes morality itself as animal, McDowell (1998) writes that "reliably kind behaviour is not the outcome of a blind, non-rational habit or instinct, like the courageous behaviour – so called only by courtesy – of a lioness defending her cubs" (51). He thinks virtue also requires a "reliable sensitivity to a certain sort of requirement that situations impose on behaviour" (51). Explaining this sensitivity to something salient in terms of a passion for it – a "non-cognitive extra that would be analogous to hunger" (70) – seems to him "highly implausible" (71). As he reiterates, "perceptions of saliences resist decomposition into 'pure' awareness together with appetitive states" (71). He criticizes the Humean Theory as "a philosophy of mind that insists on a strict separation between cognitive capacities and their exercise, on the one hand, and what eighteenth-century writers would classify as passions and sentiments, on the other" (200). McDowell has the cognitive capacities including a faculty of reason that perceives moral reasons and motivates action accordingly.

The phenomenology of salient moral considerations that McDowell describes is more elegantly explained by treating virtues as passions. The Hedonic and Attentional Aspects give desire and aversion a phenomenology in which their objects are salient. Hungry people attend to food, and are pleased by opportunities to eat it. Similarly, benevolent people attend to others who need help, and are pleased by opportunities to help them. Their altruistic desires thus explain the perceptual salience of others in need. People in wildernesses attend to dangerous animals, becoming anxious when they approach. Similarly, conscientious people attend to their commitments, becoming anxious if they risk being unable to fulfill them. Their aversions to violating commitments thus explain the perceptual salience of unfulfilled commitments. The Humean Theory explains "perceptions of saliences" using exactly the entities McDowell thinks it can't – the phenomenology of passion, plus awareness of what is happening. As I argue (2016), this leaves McDowell's additional faculty of reason explaining nothing. It's an extravagant addition to psychology for Occam's Razor to cut away.

Zarathustra's picture of passions as virtues in "Passions" is founded on the salience that passion bestows on its object. Desire makes its object look good because of the Hedonic Aspect. Then desirers can see themselves as virtuous for desiring the good. Nietzsche's view is founded on the phenomenological effects of passion that McDowell misattributes to reason. Their views also differ in that Zarathustra treats value and virtue as subjective while McDowell treats them as objective. But this difference concerns the metaphysics of value rather than moral psychology. Those

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who accept Zarathustra's moral psychology and the objectivity of value, can add the claim that objective value inheres in some objects of passion.[14] Zarathustra's moral psychology explains the saliences McDowell describes all the same.

While considerable recent scholarship examines Nietzsche's moral psychology, *Zarathustra* receives relatively little attention, even from scholars who do excellent work on Nietzsche's other writings.[15] Many cannot find well-developed philosophical positions and arguments in the poetry of *Zarathustra*. This makes some question whether such positions and arguments are even to be found in a work of such unusual form. But while many sections of *Zarathustra* have dialogue or narrative form, "Despisers" and "Passions" largely consist in Zarathustra discussing how parts of our minds might interact with each other. While his phrasing has a Biblical flavor, the Bible itself communicates considerable descriptive content this way, as a Lutheran pastor's son would know well. So the form of these sections suggests trying to extract the ideas from the poetry as Nietzsche's father might from a Bible verse.

Listen closely to Zarathustra's poetry, and you will hear him rejecting the views of selfhood and virtue favored by Plato, Kant, and Christian ascetics in favor of a Humean view that grounds them in desire. Those who can find such views elsewhere in Nietzsche's work are encouraged to reveal them; I know of no similarly detailed articulation. I assume that Zarathustra's views in the cited passages are Nietzsche's unless textual evidence suggests otherwise, but I'll attribute these views to Zarathustra himself so that readers who think otherwise can criticize my interpretation more easily. As I deal with these sections as a whole, covering them from beginning to end, my interpretation will include more than Zarathustra's answers to Korsgaard and McDowell's arguments. This helps to support my interpretive claims and to more fully express Zarathustra's views.

7.2 How Passions Constitute Selves in "On the Despisers of the Body"

Zarathustra begins with harsh words for the despisers of the body: "I would not have them learn and teach differently, but merely say farewell

[14] While Hume and Nietzsche agree that value is not an objective feature of reality, their views of moral value differ. Hume thinks moral value can be retained in noncognitivist or subjectivist form. As Foenander (2011) shows, Nietzsche is an error theorist.

[15] Alfano (2019), Anderson and Cristy (2017), Mitchell (2020).

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to their own bodies – and thus become silent." As I will soon argue with textual evidence from later in the "Despisers" section, "body" refers to one's passions collectively.[16] Zarathustra argues that despising the body is being averse to one's own passions, and therefore one's self. Against the despisers' assumption that their selves are independent from passion, he advances Humean Self-Constitution, which treats selves as constituted by passion.

Zarathustra considers two ways of speaking about oneself. First, one might say "Body am I, and soul." He describes this as a child's way of speaking, though he makes clear that he does not reject it: "And why should one not speak like children?" He compares it to what the "awakened and knowing say: body am I entirely, and nothing else; and soul is only a word for something about the body." What the awakened and knowing say entails what the children say. The children indeed are both body and soul. But they have not yet chosen between a dualistic view that the body and soul are two distinct and independent things, or the view that the soul is something about the body and not a separate thing – in metaphysical parlance, constituted by the body. The awakened and knowing reject dualism and see the body as constituting the soul in some way.

What does Zarathustra mean by "body" and "soul?" His one similarly extensive discussion of body–soul relations is told to the crowd in the marketplace: "Once the soul looked contemptuously upon the body, and then this contempt was the highest: she wanted the body meager, ghastly, and starved. Thus she hoped to escape it and the earth. Oh, this soul herself was still meager, ghastly, and starved: and cruelty was the lust of this soul" (*Z* Prologue 3). Here the soul is presented as having aversive attitudes toward the body – cruelty and contempt. Humean Self-Constitution treats this as the body containing aversions toward the whole of itself. Zarathustra then considers how the body is disposed toward the soul, asking "But you, too, my brothers, tell me: what does your body proclaim of your soul? Is not your soul poverty and filth and wretched contentment?" The body can proclaim such things in a fairly literal sense if it is constituted by mental states like passions. It is unclear how body parts like the elbow or the esophagus would proclaim anything of the soul. But passions can easily be understood as proclaiming such criticisms of a soul that frustrates their satisfaction. This supports interpreting "body" as referring to all of one's passions, with "soul" referring to the subset of

[16] I follow Richardson (2013), who understands "body" as consisting of instinctual drives. He notes that in "Despisers," "body" seems broader, fitting my view that it includes all drives.

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these passions currently controlling one's reflective thought.[17] Passions figure more straightforwardly in the relations Zarathustra describes than flesh itself would.

If "body" refers to passions, conflicts between body and soul are conflicts between passions. For the soul to look contemptuously upon the body is for the passions dominating reflective thought to conflict with other passions. Then reflective thought judges passion harshly, as the *Genealogy* illustrates. Slave moralists' unselfish values condemn their selfish passions; the bad conscience delivers harsh judgments of one's immoral passions; ascetics loathe their own animal passions and seek to dominate them. The *Genealogy* tells us that reflective condemnation of the body in each of these cases is constituted by sublimated passion. Slave moralists have passions for revenge against the masters; the bad conscience is an aggressive passion opposed to one's other passions; ascetics have passions for power over their animal passions. Nietzsche bemoans how these passions conflict with bodily passions, hoping they can be realigned with the body. Here Zarathustra similarly agrees with bodily passion that the soul should change.

The next sentence of "Despisers" describes the body as "a great reason, a plurality with one sense, a war and a peace, a herd and a shepherd." The last three metaphors treat the body as composed of separate things that can sometimes unite, which is how Humean Self-Constitution treats the passions composing the self. Calling the body a plurality or a herd implies that separate entities compose it. Calling it war implies conflict between these entities. Unity is achieved when the plurality has one sense, when war gives way to peace, and when the herd follows its shepherd.[18] These metaphors describe how passions can conflict, or be aligned and unified. Zarathustra then says, "An instrument of your body is also your little reason, my brother, which you call 'spirit' – a little instrument and toy of your great reason." Here Zarathustra repeatedly identifies one's "great reason" with the body. This helps us understand Zarathustra's subsequent remark that "the body and its great reason . . . does not say 'I,' but does 'I.'" According to the Humean Theory, all my action is driven by my passions. If the balance of my passions favors an action (given what

[17] This thesis is stronger than Humean Self-Constitution, which allows other mental states like belief to be non-motivational parts of the self. But since any view that includes the passions in the self will answer Korsgaard's objection, the differences are not important here.

[18] This can be achieved by stronger drives subordinating weaker drives, as Richardson (2013) and Katsafanas (2016) describe.

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I believe about its effects), I will do it. Otherwise, I won't. This is why my passions collectively are what does "I."

The "spirit," or "little reason," seems to be one of the self's information-gathering instruments, much like the senses. The German term is *Geist*, also translated as "intellect." Zarathustra describes how the self "seeks with the eyes of the senses" and "listens with the ears of the spirit." He describes what sense and spirit detect as never having "its end in itself," saying that they mislead us into thinking they are "the end of all things." The German expressions are *in sich sein Ende* and *aller Dinge Ende*, both reminiscent of famous Kantian expressions. One is *Ding an sich*, "for things-in-themselves," the Kantian term for the metaphysical foundation of reality. Another is *Zweck an sich*, for the Kantian conception of rational agency as an end in itself, deserving respect rather than mere use as a means. *Zweck* is often translated as "purpose." *Ende* is closer to the meanings of the English word "end" as a spatial or temporal final part. While the connection to Kant would have been unmistakable with *Zweck*, Zarathustra generally doesn't name-drop philosophical concepts of Nietzsche's era so explicitly, and *Ende* goes well with his spatial metaphor that the self is "behind" spirit and sense.[19] Zarathustra rejects the rationalist view that the spirit is the end of all things, behind all of one's psychological activity. Instead, he takes the totality of one's desires, which makes up one's self, to be behind everything. He notes that the self is behind the ego too.

Having identified the body with "great reason," Zarathustra further identifies it with the "mighty ruler" and "unknown sage" called the "self," saying that it stands behind one's thoughts and feelings. Zarathustra also says of the self, "he is your body." While Zarathustra uses a bewildering variety of terms for psychological entities throughout this section, he clarifies that many of them refer to the same things. This leaves us with only two psychological components at the end. He says that the "body," "great reason," and the "self" all refer to one thing that stands behind and controls another thing, variously referred to as the "soul," "little reason," the "spirit," and the "ego."

Zarathustra then describes how the self controls the ego's thoughts: by making it feel pleasure and pain. Since our passions explain much of what pleases and displeases us, this is further evidence that passions constitute

[19] Nietzsche generally avoids placing *Zarathustra* in a specific real-world place or time. Consider the one substantive change from *GS* 342 and *Z*:I "Prologue" 1 – "Lake Urmi" becomes "the lake of his home." He likewise avoids distinctively Kantian phrases.

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the body, which Zarathustra also calls the self. Humean Self-Constitution has the self consisting of all passion and controlling the ego, which is responsible for rational thought. Zarathustra expresses this in the voice of the self: "I am the leading strings of the ego and the prompter of its concepts." The self says to the ego, "Feel pain here!" and "Feel pleasure here!" making the ego think about how to avoid whatever pained it and attain whatever pleased it. This is how the ego is "*made* to think." Humean Self-Constitution gives the passions that constitute the self considerable control over pleasure and displeasure, via the Hedonic Aspect. Being pleased by something makes us think it is good. Being displeased by something makes us think it is bad. Zarathustra explains that the ego is not independently discovering goodness or badness, as its advocates who distinguish it from passion might think. Passions constituting the self explain these feelings. This is Zarathustra's explanatory argument for Humean Self-Constitution, which I develop in *Humean Nature*.

What is the ego, and what is the significance of the self's control over it? "Ich" is usually translated as "I," but Kaufmann renders it as "ego" when Nietzsche uses it as an ordinary singular noun, as in "the self says to the ego."[20] The previous section, "On the Afterworldly," is the only one where "ego" is used as much as "On the Despisers of the Body." There Zarathustra describes how the ego can recover from an unhealthy focus on the afterlife and learn to love the body and this life:

> Indeed, this ego and the ego's contradiction and confusion still speak most honestly of its being this creating, willing, valuing ego, which is the measure and value of things. And this most honest being, the ego, speaks of the body and still wants the body, even when it poetizes and raves and flutters with broken wings. It learns to speak ever more honestly, this ego: and the more it learns, the more words and honors it finds for body and earth.

Zarathustra understands the ego to have a central role in creating, willing, and valuing. The ego can perform these operations favorably or unfavorably toward the body. When it regards the body unfavorably, the result may be the sort of internal conflict between values and passions described in the *Genealogy* – slave moralists opposing their own violent passions, the bad conscience condemning unruly passion, and ascetics wishing to control their animal passions. When the ego regards the body favorably, values and passions are in line with each other. This is psychological health.

[20] Here he follows James Strachey's influential translation of Freud's *The Ego and the Id* (Freud 1960).

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Internal conflicts between the self and the ego (now referred to as spirit) are Zarathustra's next topic. He tells the despisers of the body that their own values are merely expressions of their passions. He explains the pleasant and unpleasant feelings explaining the phenomenology of the spirit's valuing in terms of the body's ability to generate the experiences of pleasure and pain: "The creative self created respect and contempt; it created pleasure and pain. The creative body created the spirit as a hand for its will." Just as animals are pleased to discover food, ascetics feel the pleasure of high self-regard when they reflect on their feats of self-control. And just as animals are displeased to have their food taken away, ascetics feel the displeasure of contempt when they reflect on giving in to temptations they regard as beneath them. The hedonic phenomenology of respect and contempt reveals that they are manifestations of the same bodily passions toward which ascetics are contemptuous.

Having laid out these premises of his critique, Zarathustra delivers the conclusion: "Even in your folly and contempt, you despisers of the body, you serve your self." Fifteen sentences earlier, Zarathustra clarified that "body" and "self" refer to the same thing. Here he tells the despisers of the body that they themselves serve their bodies. If the body is all of one's passions, Zarathustra is telling the despisers of the body that their passions have turned against passion itself. The ascetic's passion not to be ruled by mere passions is one example. The Kantian passion to escape heteronomy by not letting one's passions rule oneself is another. Ascetics and Kantians both deny that these cherished motivations are merely passions. The hedonic phenomenology these motivations share with uncontroversial instances of passion is evidence against their claims.

Zarathustra concludes this section by diagnosing what has gone wrong with the despisers of the body. They view worldly things with too much aversion and too little desire. If they had stronger desires for worldly things, these passions would engross them in creative activity and enjoyment of life. But a self that looks on standard objects of passion with aversion instead "wants to die and turns away from life." As he tells them, "Your self wants to go under, and that is why you have become despisers of the body. For you are no longer able to create beyond yourselves."

7.3 How Passions Explain Perceptual Saliences in "Passions"

"Passions" describes how a despiser of the body might be healed, with passions unifying in favor their worldly objects and becoming virtues.

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Central to Zarathustra's explanation is the idea McDowell rejects – that passions make their objects salient.[21]

The "Passions" section begins with Zarathustra advising against referring to one's virtue in the words of a public language. Instead, one's virtue should be "too exalted for the familiarity of names." His concern is unusual: if you name your virtue, you will have its "name in common with the people" and "become one of the people and herd with your virtue." No other virtue ethicist I know of argues against naming one's virtues. Traditional virtue ethicists explicitly discuss virtues like honesty and kindness at length. They might not see any possibility of leaving one's virtues "inexpressible and nameless," thinking the virtues have all received names in a public language. What motivates Zarathustra's unusual view? While he certainly appreciates distinctive forms of individual excellence, it is hard to see why naming one's virtue would undermine one's individuality. Perhaps he thinks that naming the virtue would lead others to develop it, undermining one's distinctiveness. As I will explain, the subjective nature of value on Zarathustra's view prevents anything from being objectively virtuous, and thus describable as a virtue by everyone.

Zarathustra tells us how to speak of our virtues:

> Then speak and stammer: "This is my good; this I love; it pleases me wholly; thus alone do I want the good. I do not want it as divine law; I do not want it as human statute and need: it shall not be a signpost for me to overearths and paradises. It is an earthly virtue that I love: there is little prudence in it, and least of all the reason of all men. But this bird built its nest with me: therefore I love and caress it; now it dwells with me, sitting on its golden eggs."

Zarathustra rejects traditional views of virtue as objective and universal. He tells us to accept the subjectivity of virtue with open eyes, explicitly rejecting philosophical devices for giving it a more objective nature. These include divine law, human law, prudence, and any sort of universal reason. Moreover, having a virtue is not a matter of choice or rational decision to have the virtue. Instead, virtue is likened to a bird that chooses for herself where to build her nest. Zarathustra then refers to "your virtues" as "passions you enjoyed," implying that virtues are passions. To demonstrate the significance of this Humean commitment, I will explain how it makes virtues subjective, individual, and not determined by rational choice.

[21] Katsafanas (2013b) notes that drives direct attention. This property of drives is explained by the attention-directing powers of the passions that compose them.

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First, it is natural to understand passions as making their objects subjectively valuable. Passions confer the subjective values of deliciousness on food and beauty on art. Platitudes like "there's no accounting for taste" and "beauty is in the eye of the beholder" express the subjective nature of these values. Because desires can make their objects subjectively valuable, they can turn themselves into subjective virtues.[22] This is a consequence of the generally accepted view that desiring the good is virtuous.[23] Desire makes its object good to the desirer. Desire for food makes its object delicious to the hungry. Aesthetic desire makes its object beautiful to the appreciator or creator. The creative desire driving Nietzsche to write the above passage of *Zarathustra* made it beautiful to him. His desire therefore aimed at creating the value that is beauty, and made itself a virtue, as desires for valuable things are. In third-personal admiration of aesthetic virtue, we admire other people who have created artworks we appreciate. If Nietzsche appreciates Stendhal's *Le Rouge et le Noir*, regarding it as aesthetically valuable, he will admire Stendhal as an artist for creating it.[24] Here another person is the artist, but admiration works similarly when one is the artist oneself. Artists delighted by their own artworks can admire themselves for valuing and creating wonderful things, seeing virtue first-personally. Zarathustra recognizes that all desires make their objects subjectively valuable, and therefore make themselves subjective virtues.[25]

This is why Zarathustra tells us to stammer of our virtues. Such stammering won't express the proposition that our passions are virtues as an objective truth, but rather as a subjective truth relativized to ourselves as people who have these passions. If Nietzsche regards *Zarathustra* as beautiful, the passion that drove him to write it will be a virtue to him. But if Quine Zarathustra simply unpleasant to read, Nietzsche's creative passion will be a vice to Quine. Calling *Zarathustra* good or Nietzsche's creative passion an artistic virtue falls short of standards of objective truth, just as stammering falls short of standards of clear expression. But Zarathustra commends stammering to us anyway, treating it as the only way the good can be appropriately discussed.[26]

[22] Sinhababu (2015) uses this to algebraically derive a formula for the virtue of agents.
[23] Hurka (2001) defends this view, noting historical advocates including Aristotle.
[24] Nietzsche defends Stendhal's view of aesthetic appreciation as grounded in creativity against Kant's rationalist view (*GM* III:6).
[25] Hunt (1991) requires some agency to assign functions to passions in order to make them virtues, while I think the passion itself can do the work.
[26] Gooding-Williams (2001) understands stammering as involving a frustration of intentions. But Zarathustra does not here express any clear wish that the stammerer's intentions be frustrated. He does however explicitly reject many conceptions of non-subjective value.

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Second, virtue grounded in passion this way is an individual matter.[27] If being virtuous were a matter of desiring to promote an objective good, it wouldn't be so individual. Passions, however, are individualized psychological states that others may not share, and they confer subjective value on things that may not have any prior objective value. As the Humean theory suggests, passions don't arise automatically in response to objective value – otherwise we might be more morally motivated and more similar in our motivations than we actually are.

Third, the Humean Theory explains why a virtue that is a passion would have "little prudence in it, and least of all the reason of all men." If all reason can do is serve and obey passions, reasoning that it would be prudent for me to change my passions in a particular way will not make my passions become that way. I can gain instrumental motivation from reasoning. If I desire whiskey and believe that I can get it at the bar, I can desire to go to the bar. But this is different from prudential reasoning, which proceeds from belief about what advances one's well-being rather than desire. If I believe that not desiring whiskey anymore would enhance my well-being, that will not end the desire.

Zarathustra holds that virtues are passions and that they make their objects perceptually salient, as passions generally do. Zarathustra's stammerer clearly sees something as good. Recognizing that this is just how passion makes its object look allows Humeans to explain the perceptual saliences McDowell discusses. Desire for food makes us see it as delicious. Desire for those we love makes us see them as beautiful. Contrary to McDowell's rationalist assumption, perceptions of these saliences simply are perceptions of the objects of passions. If virtue makes its objects look that way, it is evidence that virtues are passions.[28]

Zarathustra suggests that having strong and unified passions prevents one from worrying about whether the objects of passion have objective value.[29] The Humean Theory explains this. To care about whether the objects of one's passions have objective value, one needs a passion for them to have objective value. If nothing has objective value, this passion will not

[27] Higgins (1987) emphasizes the individuality of passion.
[28] Swanton (2015) attributes a similar combination of sentimentalism and response-dependent virtue ethics to Hume and Nietzsche, also contrasting this with McDowell's view.
[29] Hayward (2019) makes this point about love. Lenman (2014) considers a broad range of ordinary passions.

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be satisfied, and one will look upon one's passions with dissatisfaction. But if one lacks such a passion, one will not care about whether the objects of passion have objective value. We have such attitudes toward obviously subjective sorts of value. Moral error theorists, who believe that nothing is objectively valuable, can still regard food as subjectively valuable. Their passions for food make it delicious to them and motivate them to eat it, despite their belief that it lacks objective value. Hungry people usually aren't averse to eating food that lacks objective value, just as they are not averse to using utensils that lack a decorative pattern. One might require a truly great meal to stammer, "This is my food; this I love; it pleases me wholly; thus alone do I want the food." But this would actually fit Zarathustra's metaphor in the chapter from Part II entitled "On Those who are Sublime": "all of life is a dispute over taste and tasting. Taste—that is at the same time weight and scales and weigher." The hungry can regard their food as valuable while denying that this value is grounded in divine law or any other objective and metaphysically robust source.

Zarathustra then describes how people like the despisers of the body from the previous section can become virtuous: "Once you suffered passions and called them evil. But now you have only your virtues left: they grew out of your passions. You commended your highest goal to the heart of these passions: then they become your virtues and passions you enjoyed." This seems to be possible no matter what one's passions are, as Zarathustra lists many often criticized passions as becoming virtues: "And whether you came from the tribe of the choleric or of the voluptuous or of the fanatic or of the vengeful, in the end all your passions became virtues and all your devils, angels." Several metaphors for the transformation of bad things into good things follow – "Out of your poisons you brewed your balsam."

How do devilish passions become angelic virtues? Zarathustra follows his metaphors about passions becoming virtues by saying "And nothing evil grows out of you henceforth, unless it be the evil that grows out of the fight among your virtues." If evil grows out of a fight between virtues, and virtues are passions, evil will grow out of a fight between passions. This explains why the passions were not virtues beforehand: other passions were fighting them. This is one source of dissatisfaction with merely subjective value – a passion for not having passions toward objects of merely subjective value. From the perspective of this passion, many of one's other passions are evil. Slave morality, the bad conscience, and ascetic ideals all

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promote passions hostile to life. Nietzsche opposes them all in their battle against our natural instinctual passions.

The rest of the section discusses the danger of a conflict between one's passions, the same thing that prevented passions from being virtues before. Zarathustra says that "if you are fortunate you have only one virtue and no more." While the unity of the virtues has long been a popular idea among virtue ethicists, Zarathustra here embraces a disunity of virtues. Rather than being compatible with each other or even necessary for each other's presence, "Each virtue is jealous of the others, and jealousy is a terrible thing. Virtues too can perish of jealousy."

Zarathustra's subjectivism about value and a standard view of the value-virtue relationship together entail his thesis that strong and well-unified sets of passions are virtuous, while weak passions and conflicts between passions detract from virtue. This standard view is that desires for good things are virtuous, desires for bad things are vicious, aversions to good things are vicious, and aversions to bad things are virtuous. These relations connect moral value, virtue, and vice, but they may also connect nonmoral value, virtue, and vice as well. Then if every desire makes its object good, as subjectivism says, every desire is to some extent virtuous – it is a desire for something good. Every aversion is virtuous too – it makes its object bad, so it is an aversion to something bad. Strong passions are especially virtuous. A strong desire is an intense love of something wonderful, and a strong aversion is firm opposition to a terrible thing. Weak passions do not do much to raise one's virtue, as they are weak motivations toward things of insignificant value.

This also entails that conflict between passions detracts from virtue, as Zarathustra explains later in the section. Having some desire and some aversion for something makes it somewhat good and somewhat bad to you. Then you desire the bad and are averse to the good, which are vices. They offset your virtue in desiring the good and being averse to the bad. Those averse to their own desires and to the objects of their own desires – despisers of the body – have especially vicious character. All their desires are bad, and their desires are for subjectively bad things. This is why Zarathustra inveighs so strongly against them. His view explains why both desire and aversion have a complicated perceptual salience. Dieters see delicious but unhealthy foods as guilty pleasures, bearing both positive and negative value at once. When instinctual passions conflict with ascetic ideals, the bad conscience, or values created by *ressentiment*, people see value in a similarly conflicted way.

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As "Despisers" and "Passions" together reveal, Zarathustra doesn't want us to see value with such conflicted eyes. Strong and unified passions let us see value in its full glory. Recognizing the subjectivity of this value might leave us able only to stammer of it. But even those who stammer can see its full beauty if their passions are strong and pure.[30]

[30] These ideas came to me early in my studies, so I must thank all the instructors and classmates who tolerated my wild enthusiasm about them in Nietzsche seminars. Two wonderful teachers deserve special thanks. Melissa Barry introduced me to analytic metaethics and saw promise in the term paper where I first advanced this response to Korsgaard. Her encouragement led me to develop it further in my undergraduate thesis under the kind and helpful supervision of Raphael Woolf. Their thoughtful support showed me that ideas from *Zarathustra* could impress philosophers working in other areas, giving me confidence to do the work that launched my career.

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CHAPTER 8

Zarathustra's Great Contempt

Scott Jenkins

Zarathustra announces early in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* that he is delivering a gift to humanity (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3), and at the beginning of his first speech we learn that his gift takes the form of a teaching: "*I teach you the Übermensch*. Humanity is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome it?" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3).[1] He then proceeds to tell his listeners what they can do to follow his teaching and assist in this project of overcoming humanity – they can come to experience *contempt* for themselves:

> What is the greatest experience you can have? It is the hour of the great contempt [*Verachtung*]. The hour in which your happiness, too, arouses your disgust [*Ekel*], and even your reason and your virtue.
>
> The hour when you say, "What matters my happiness? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness ought to justify exis tence itself."
>
> The hour when you say, "What matters my reason? Does it crave knowl edge as the lion his food? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment." (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3)

This certainly does not *sound* like a great experience, and as Zarathustra proceeds to characterize this hour of great contempt as one that also targets a person's virtue, justice, and compassion, its status as "the greatest experience you can have" does not become any clearer. Being disgusted with oneself and feeling contempt for oneself (or for some aspect of oneself) seems both unpleasant and unhealthy.

[1] I have relied on Kaufmann's translation of *Zarathustra (Z* 1954), though I occasionally modify it to address issues of gender or to create a more standard terminology in English. I leave the term "Übermensch" untranslated. Other translations consulted in this chapter are: *A* (1954); *BGE* (1989); *CW* (1967); *GM* (1989); *GS* (2001); *SE* (1997);

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I aim to show that the great contempt that Zarathustra recommends in the Prologue of *Zarathustra* is the most extreme form of a distinctive critical attitude toward oneself that Nietzsche regards as both healthy and constitutive of true self-love. While this variety of contempt is essential to the teaching of the *Übermensch*, I argue that Nietzsche also recommends it independent of Zarathustra's project of overcoming humanity. I begin in Section 8.1 by providing a framework for understanding contempt as an evaluative emotional state and sketching three common varieties of contempt that appear in Nietzsche's writings – noble contempt, moral contempt, and religious-ascetic contempt. In Section 8.2, I consider how those three varieties interact in Zarathustra's most extensive discussion of contempt (*Z*:III "Passing By"), and how that interaction points forward to Zarathustra's notion of great contempt. In Section 8.3, I then turn to Zarathustra's claim that this is the greatest experience we can have and consider the relation between great contempt and self-love. In Section 8.4, I complete my account of great contempt as a descendent of noble contempt and religious-ascetic contempt by showing how, in great contempt, we take a critical stance toward the present from the standpoint of a superior future. I then appeal to this temporal quality in elucidating the role that great contempt plays in Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch*.

8.1 Three Varieties of Contempt

Contempt is an attitude that essentially involves *looking down* on someone or something. When we contemn, we regard the object of contempt as beneath us, inferior, and perhaps even unworthy of respect or regard.[2] Thus contempt employs a standard of value in relation to which its object is found wanting. While contempt surely involves more than just an evaluative stance (for example, it is associated with the feeling of disgust [*Ekel*] and an aversive response to its object), Nietzsche approaches contempt primarily as an instance of valuing. The varieties of contempt that he catalogs will all differ with respect to the evaluative height from which we contemptuously look down.[3]

[2] The German "*verachten*" could be translated as "to despise," "to scorn," or "to disdain," but I will often employ the somewhat archaic "to contemn" in order to maintain continuity with the noun "contempt" and to avoid the occasionally awkward construction "to have contempt for."

[3] In focusing more on the evaluative height from which we contemn than on the object targeted by contempt, my discussion of the varieties of contempt in Nietzsche differs from that of Alfano (2019: sec. 8.4).

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Nietzsche's well-known distinction between two fundamentally different kinds of values in his *On the Genealogy of Morality* – noble values and moral values – generates a distinction between two fundamentally different kinds of contempt associated with these values. The persons Nietzsche terms 'noble' employ as their standard of value the excellence they perceive in themselves and those like them. To use Nietzsche's examples from the time of the Jewish–Roman War, the Roman noble regards himself as good because he instantiates Roman martial virtues, while the Jewish noble regards himself as good because he instantiates the Jewish ideal of purity. The bad person, by contrast, is the ignoble, common person who lacks such virtues. Thus for the noble mode of valuation, "its negative concept 'low', 'common', 'bad' is only a subsequently-invented pale, contrasting image in relation to its positive basic concept" (*GM* I:10; see also *BGE* 260). According to Nietzsche, nobles often viscerally experience this difference between themselves and those who lack their virtues, and this 'pathos of distance' structures aristocratic societies: "The pathos of nobility and distance, as aforesaid, the protracted and domineering fundamental total feeling on the part of a higher ruling order in relation to a lower order, to a 'below'—*that* is the origin of the antithesis 'good' and 'bad'" (*GM* I:2). Since the contempt that a noble person feels for a common person expresses this felt distance between the height of instantiating human excellence and the lowliness of lacking it, *noble contempt* typically presents its object as unworthy of regard. In contempt the noble person pays no heed to the contemned object, or perhaps simply "looks away" from it (*GM* I:10).[4]

Moral contempt, by contrast, typically takes the form of indignation or outrage directed at a person on the basis of an action that person has performed.[5] Nietzsche's genealogy of morality postulates that this impassioned fixation on the target of moral contempt originates in the nonmoral reactive attitude of *ressentiment* – the vengeful hatred of one who has done us harm. While the details of Nietzsche's genealogy of moral values lie outside my scope, two points are worth emphasizing.[6] First, Nietzsche pursues the genealogical hypothesis that moral attitudes originate in *ressentiment* partly because he sees the same reactive structure in both cases.

[4] See Bell (2013: sec. 4.1) for further discussion of passive noble contempt as it appears in Nietzsche and Aristotle. As will be evident in my exposition of great contempt, I disagree with Bell's claim that this is the variety of contempt that Nietzsche advocates.

[5] Mason (2003) provides a useful account of moral contempt and notes the incompatibility between this variety of contempt and Nietzschean nobility.

[6] For further details see Jenkins (2018).

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Just as the vengeful person reacts negatively to the action of another, moral judgment originates in a negative reaction: "While every noble morality develops from a triumphant affirmation of itself, slave morality from the outset says No to what is 'outside,' what is 'different,' what is 'not itself'; and *this* No is its creative deed" (*GM* I:10).[7] This contrast with the noble mode of valuation yields a second point – while the noble height from which one recognizes excellence or contemns its opposite emerges from an act of self-affirmation, the moral height necessary for moral contempt emerges only through a process of self-deception. Nietzsche maintains that vengeful agents who desperately wish they were capable of taking revenge manufacture for themselves a semblance of self-respect by reinterpreting their inability to act as the choice to be morally good (*GM* I:10, *GM* I:13). This reinterpretation is motivated in part by "the will of the weak to represent *some* form of superiority" (*GM* III:14), and from this new, moral 'height' they contemn others for their immoral acts (which include the very same acts of revenge they wish they could themselves perform).

The contempt for oneself that Zarathustra terms "great contempt" must be different from these two familiar varieties of contempt. Contempt for oneself is easy to understand if that contempt is moral in nature. People who take their actions to fall short of what is required by morality can have contempt for themselves just as easily as they can for another. But Zarathustra's great contempt cannot be moral contempt because it is grounded not on the moral assessment of a particular action but on an evaluation of the person's experiences, character, and abilities. And while noble contempt, by contrast, is grounded on the evaluation of the person, its disdainful "looking away" is quite different from the passionate concern about oneself characteristic of the great contempt. In addition, noble self-contempt would seem to be a contradiction in terms since contempt for oneself appears incompatible with the *affirmation* of oneself that is constitutive of nobility: "the noble soul has reverence for itself" (*BGE* 287; see also *CW* "Epilogue"). To put the point another way, if noble contempt employs one's own excellence as the evaluative standard in relation to which the contemned object falls short, noble *self*-contempt would appear to be incoherent insofar as one cannot simultaneously possess and lack the virtue that serves as this standard.

[7] While Nietzsche speaks of "noble morality" in *GM* I:10 and *BGE* 260, I will follow his more common usage by refraining from classifying noble values as a form of morality.

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Just prior to his recommendation of great contempt, Zarathustra points to a third variety of contempt – what I will term *religious-ascetic contempt* – that more closely resembles great contempt:

> Once the soul looked contemptuously upon the body, and then this contempt was the highest: it wanted the body meager, ghastly, and starved. Thus it hoped to escape the body and the earth. Oh, this soul itself was still meager, ghastly and starved: and cruelty was the lust of this soul. (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3)

Zarathustra will illuminate this religious-ascetic worldview early in *Zarathustra* I, first by offering a psychological explanation of belief in a metaphysical beyond (*Z*:I "Afterworldly") and then by drawing on that explanation in his address to those who despise or contemn their bodies (*Z*:I "Despisers").[8] Here in the Prologue he focuses exclusively on the distinctive contempt for self that is made possible by identifying ourselves with immaterial souls that are distinct from our material bodies and denizens of a "higher" realm. Even though we are nothing beyond our bodies, and our contempt for those bodies is rooted in the cruelty of those very bodies, the belief in an immaterial soul makes possible a critical attitude toward our bodies. Religious ascetics *look down* on everything that constitutes them as human animals – their bodily needs and urges, and even life itself (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3). Similarly, a person who experiences Zarathustra's great contempt looks down on everything that constitutes them as a spirit or soul – their happiness, reason, virtue, and so on (considered, of course, as nothing more than capacities of human bodies). This similarity suggests that Zarathustra models great contempt on a religious ascetic's contempt for everything that is "body," or "world." So understood, great contempt is part of Zarathustra's project of teaching new values by inverting or transposing more familiar ways of valuing. The task we face as readers is to follow Zarathustra in his revisioning of religious-ascetic contempt for oneself.

8.2 Zarathustra and His Ape

Zarathustra's only discussion of the varieties of contempt appears in his speech "On Passing By," which he addresses to a "foaming fool" whom he

[8] Nietzsche's phrase is "*Von den Verächtern des Leibes*," which could be translated "On those who have contempt for the body."

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encounters at the gate to a great city. As Zarathustra attempts to enter the city, this figure blocks his way and delivers his own extended, impassioned speech on the dangers that await Zarathustra there. In short, the citizens are said to be inauthentically pious, mindlessly at odds with one another, self-indulgent, and enamored with gold above all else, and these values ensure that in the city "great thoughts" and "great feelings" only decay over time. In condemning the city, this "fool" appropriates Zarathustra's phrasing and many of his concerns about the culture of his time (e.g., that newspapers are venues of unoriginal thought and interpersonal strife [*Z*:I "The New Idol"]) – a tendency that has earned this figure the title "Zarathustra's ape." Zarathustra is disgusted by this aping of his words and cuts off the fool by exclaiming, "Stop at last! Your speech and your manner have long disgusted [*ekelt*] me" (*Z*:III "Passing By"). As he elaborates the nature of his disgust – the feeling that occasions contempt – he implicitly draws on the three varieties of contempt described above and gestures toward his own notion of great contempt.[9]

Zarathustra expresses the organizing thought of his speech in the phrase "I have contempt for your contempt [*Ich verachte deine Verachtung*]." He recognizes the ape's speech as contemptuous, but at the same time holds that contempt *itself* in low regard. This attitude by itself does not entail a commitment to multiple varieties of contempt, though Zarathustra quickly distinguishes his contempt from the ape's by distinguishing the psychological grounds of these states. While Zarathustra takes his own contempt to emerge "out of love alone," he diagnoses the ape's as rooted in revenge. Thus Zarathustra and the ape use the same words to express different, even *opposed* psychological states. This fact introduces a central theme of Nietzsche's discussions of contempt—that contemptuous speech is ambiguous when considered independent of its motivations or grounds.

Zarathustra begins his diagnosis of the ape's contempt by asking why, if he regards the city as pernicious, the ape has chosen to live there. Leaving such a city would, of course, be Zarathustra's choice. He then asks of the ape:

[9] Zarathustra never articulates the relation between the visceral reaction of disgust and the more intellectual stance of contempt, though a remark in "On Passing By" is suggestive. After noting that his disgust was triggered by what he finds putrid in the ape's outburst, he states, "Out of love alone shall my despising and my warning bird fly up" (*Z*:III "Passing By"). Here the "warning bird" is surely the previously mentioned reaction of disgust, which warns Zarathustra that he should distance himself from the ape (just as disgust for rotting food or feces serves as a warning to us). The visceral warning precedes the more intellectual contempt. For more on the relation between disgust and contempt, see von Tevenar (2013), von Tevenar (2019), and Alfano (2019: ch. 8).

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> What was it that first made you grunt? That nobody flattered you sufficiently; you sat down to this filth so as to have reason to grunt much to have reason for much *revenge*. For all your foaming is revenge, you vain fool; I guessed it well. (*Z*:III "Passing By")

The ape remains in the city simply in order to take revenge on it. His contemptuous "grunting" of Zarathustra's words is an act of revenge performed in response to an injury done to him by the city. He had hoped to be recognized and esteemed by others in the city – to be "flattered" – and was hurt when that recognition did not come his way. Lacking Zarathustra's ability to love and pursue an ideal of his own, the ape lurks around the city's gate and spews invective as a way of covering up and compensating for the pain of being rejected. We might recognize in the ape those young, lonely readers of Nietzsche who appropriate his words in lashing out at a society that seems not to recognize or esteem them. I believe that Zarathustra's response to the ape points toward Nietzsche's advice to such a reader, and I will return to this reading of Zarathustra's speech. But the main point of the beginning of the speech is that the ape's reaction to the city distorts Zarathustra's teaching by deploying it within a fundamentally reactive, moralizing framework. Recognizing his new wine in these old wineskins, Zarathustra proclaims "even if Zarathustra's words *were* a thousand times right, still *you* would always *do* wrong with my words." What the ape aims to *do* is to harm the city – and, perhaps, to procure for himself a cheap feeling of superiority over its inhabitants. And from the height of his own excellence, Zarathustra looks down on these ignoble aims.

Despite his noble contempt for the ape's vengeful contempt, Zarathustra eventually leaves him with a gift in the form of a teaching: "Where one can no longer love, there one should *pass by* [*vorübergehen*]."[10] This teaching, which yields the title of this speech, is Zarathustra's one piece of advice to the figure that represents a particular kind of reader of Nietzsche – one who vengefully apes his words. At first this advice seems rather simple; the fool should cease his attacks on the unwelcoming city and pass it by in search of a more congenial locale. But the affinity between this "passing by" and the act of "looking away" characteristic of noble contempt (see again *GM* I:10) points to a deeper psychological benefit of this teaching. Trading his reactive fixation on the city for a passive indifference characteristic of noble contempt would create in the fool a

[10] Zarathustra also discusses contempt and passing by in *Z*:II "Creator."

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psychic space in which an original, non-reactive project might grow. Thus passing by is also sage advice for a person already engaged in such a project, but tempted toward vengeful retaliation upon suffering a harm. Zarathustra, for example, recognizes that he has been harmed by the fool's theft and distortion of his teaching (which is, of course, Zarathustra's most prized "possession"). He asserts, "your fool's words injure me, even where you are right." But he resists the temptation to take revenge for that injury and thereby avoids the pointless and distracting cycle of harm and retaliation described in his earlier speech on revenge (*Z*:II "Tarantulas"). Upon concluding his speech, Zarathustra follows his own advice and simply passes by the fool to continue on own his path, thereby exhibiting for us the practical and psychological benefits of noble contempt.[11]

Since Zarathustra's speech "On Passing By" recommends that we avoid the vengeful fixation of moral contempt and cultivate instead the indifference of noble contempt, it is surprising that at the end of his speech we find Zarathustra far from indifferent toward the city he confronts. Just before he relates his teaching of passing by, he remarks:

> I am disgusted by [*mich ekelt*] this great city too, and not only by this fool. Here as there, there is nothing to better, nothing to worsen. Woe unto this great city! And I wish I already saw a pillar of fire in which it will be burned. For such pillars of fire must precede the great noon. But this has its own time and its own destiny. (*Z*:III "Passing By")

It might seem that by experiencing disgust and wishing for the fiery destruction of this city, Zarathustra indulges in the same vengeful contempt that he identifies and contemns in the fool. His exclamation "woe unto this great city" would appear to confirm that suspicion. This phrase echoes a passage from the biblical Book of Revelation, which Nietzsche

[11] The benefits of noble contempt extend beyond the narrowly ethical realm since this attitude closely resembles one that Nietzsche regards as essential to affirming life as it is. At the beginning of the fourth book of *The Gay Science*, Nietzsche states that his goals of loving fate (*amor fati*) and being only a "Yes-sayer" in relation to all things requires that he first cultivate an indifference toward those things that he might instead "accuse" of being unlovable or unaffirmable objections to life: "I do not want to accuse; I do not even want to accuse the accusers. Let *looking away* [*Wegsehen*] be my only negation!" (*GS* 276). Where Nietzsche cannot affirm, he simply *looks away* – just as Zarathustra counsels that where one cannot love, one should *pass by*. Nietzsche also recognizes that in order to say "Yes" to all things, he must first refrain from condemning *even the attitude of condemnation* that he seeks to avoid. Likewise, by passing by the fool Zarathustra avoids the trap of vengefully contemning the fool's vengeful contempt. There is much more to be explored on this topic, especially in connection with Nietzsche's presentation of Zarathustra's relation to life as an interpersonal relation (*Z*:II "Dancing Song"; *Z*:III "Other Dancing Song"). I want only to emphasize that in both contexts, the passive negation of its object that defines *passing by* or *looking away* is portrayed as superior to any moral attitude toward it.

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later describes as "the most wanton of all literary outbursts that vengefulness has on its conscience" (*GM* I:16).[12] So what are we to make of Zarathustra's contemptuous outburst toward the city?

There are plenty of indications that Zarathustra is not in the grip of vengeful, moral contempt. First, it is unclear why Zarathustra would wish to take revenge against a city that has not done *him* any harm. Consider as well the context of Zarathustra's utterance: "He looked at the city, sighed, and long remained silent [. . .] at last he spoke." A sigh followed by quiet reflection would be a strange prelude to a vengeful outburst. Finally, Zarathustra's talk of pillars of fire preceding the "great noon" – Zarathustra's vision of the high point of humanity (see *Z*:I "Gift-Giving" 3; *Z*:IV "The Sign") – points away from an interpretation of his words as vengeful. Since Zarathustra's contempt derives from his wish for these antecedents or preconditions of the great noon, he must not want to simply harm the city.

I maintain that Zarathustra's wish for the destruction of this city expresses a variety of contempt different from passive, noble contempt and vengeful, moral contempt. Zarathustra does not simply look away from the city; he instead focuses on it and takes up a passionate negative attitude toward it. However, unlike the fool's reactive moralizing, Zarathustra's contempt emerges "out of love alone" – love of an ideal that generates his vision of the great noon. In the particular case of the city, the teachings in relation to which it comes up short are those social ideals that Zarathustra aims to realize. While he says little in this speech about those ideals or their realization, it is clear that the height from which Zarathustra contemns is neither the noble height of an existent ideal nor the counterfeit height of vengeful moral judgment. Instead, from the standpoint of an imagined future for which he yearns, Zarathustra judges that the great city that confronts him comes up woefully short and thus ought to perish in order to make way for that superior state of affairs. The otherworldly height of John's contempt is replaced by the earthly "beyond" of a superior future.[13]

It is striking that just as the fool appropriates Zarathustra's words in vengefully contemning the city, Zarathustra appropriates the words of the Christian prophet in expressing his own contempt for the city.

[12] Graham Parkes notes this Biblical reference in his translation of *Zarathustra*.

[13] This is one example of how a single entity can be the target of two different varieties of contempt. See Alfano (2019: sec. 8.4.1) for further discussion of Nietzsche's distinctive contempt for the world.

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Zarathustra's "aping" of John likewise inverts the sense of those words. While they previously expressed vengefulness toward Rome, and toward "this" world as a whole, in Zarathustra's mouth the words "woe unto this great city" express only his love for the earthly ideal he aims to realize.[14] Thus by echoing the Book of Revelation in his outburst toward the city, Zarathustra provides yet another example of the potential ambiguity of contemptuous speech. More importantly, however, Zarathustra's contempt for the city serves as a model for the great contempt that he recommends to his listeners.

8.3 Great Contempt As the Greatest Experience

In both the Prologue and "On Passing By," Zarathustra compares familiar notions of religious contempt with the varieties of contempt that he either advocates or experiences. Religious-ascetic contempt for everything bodily resembles great contempt for everything in our conscious, spiritual lives, while John's contempt for Rome and everything "worldly" resembles Zarathustra's contempt for the city and the larger society that he confronts.[15] In this section, I will draw on these parallels as I begin to articulate a more complete account of great contempt as an earthly, historical transposition of religious-ascetic contempt, one that trades an otherworldly evaluative standpoint for the standpoint of a possible earthly future. This difference between religious-ascetic contempt and great contempt will also illuminate Zarathustra's reasons for describing the latter as the greatest experience one can have.

There are three main points of contact between Zarathustra's contempt for the culture of his time and the great contempt for oneself that he advocates. The first point concerns their unrestricted nature. Just as Zarathustra maintains that everything in the city ought to pass away, great contempt concerns every aspect of human existence. As a dissatisfaction with one's own happiness, reason, virtue, justice, and compassion (*Z*:I "Prologue" 4), it targets feeling, thought, character, social life, and interpersonal relations, respectively. It is difficult to identify a dimension of

[14] In another crucial moment of *Zarathustra*, the character called "the spirit of gravity" merely appears to agree with Zarathustra's talk of eternal recurrence by asserting "time itself is a circle" (*Z*:II "Vision and Riddle"). We know that this agreement is merely apparent because the words are "murmured contemptuously [*verächtlich*]." For further discussion see Loeb (2010: 52–54).

[15] It is unclear whether Zarathustra's attitude toward the city is the same great contempt that he advocates in the Prologue, though Zarathustra later speaks of the great contempt preaching "away with you" to the faces of cities and empires, until they say "away with *me*" (*Z*:III "Evils" 2).

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modern life not targeted by this contempt. Second, in both cases one's dissatisfaction derives from a perceived shortcoming of that trait or capacity in relation to an ideal. Zarathustra states, for example, that in the hour of the great contempt, a person may lament "what matters my happiness?" because they think that "my happiness ought to justify existence itself" – or "what matters my reason?" because they hold that their reason ought to "crave knowledge as the lion his food" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3). These ideals are inchoate in this early speech, but Zarathustra's aim here is not to advocate a particular theory of happiness or reason. Rather, he means to advocate a critical stance toward one's own happiness or reason, regardless of what form they presently take.[16] And third, both instances of contempt are grounded in *love* for that ideal. Zarathustra's contempt for the city clearly emerges "from love alone" – his love for the great noon – and his first words to another person, "I love human beings [*Ich liebe die Menschen*]" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 2), precede his discussions of contempt for human beings in his opening speeches. What he in fact loves in human beings is their potential to overcome themselves as individuals, and eventually, thereby, as a species. As he clarifies in his second address to the masses, "what can be loved in the human being is that it is an *overture* [Übergang] and a *going under* [Untergang]" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 4). Thus Zarathustra loves humanity for its relation to the superior future he imagines (that of the *Übermensch*), and *from the standpoint of that future* contemns what presently exists. We find the same relation between love and contempt in Zarathustra's later remarks on relations we ought to bear to ourselves. Consider his revision of the gospel of Mark: "Do love your neighbor as yourself, but first be such as *love themselves*—loving with a great love, loving with a great contempt" (*Z*:III "Virtue" 3). Here a genuine love of oneself is described as including or entailing contempt for oneself, presumably contempt for what one *presently* is. Zarathustra presents this point in more general terms earlier in the work: "Yourself you love, and therefore you contemn yourself, as only lovers contemn. The lover would create because he contemns. What does he know of love who did not have to contemn precisely what he loved?" (*Z*:I "Creator"). This contempt that spurs creation is, I suggest, contempt for one's *present* self, regarded as falling short of an ideal. Only such a standpoint would spur creation as opposed to other sorts of self-regulating activity.[17]

[16] This is one aspect of the value of self-overcoming that Zarathustra ascribes to life itself (*Z*:II "Self-Overcoming").

[17] The view that proper self-love brings with it a creative contempt for oneself appears in an instructive form in Nietzsche's early discussion of the relation of an individual to their culture: "It is love alone

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These points of contact between Zarathustra's contempt for the city and the great contempt for oneself that he advocates to his listeners suggest that both instances of contempt are secular transpositions of more familiar religious varieties of contempt. Just as the otherworldly height of John's contempt for Rome is replaced by the height of the "great noon" that Zarathustra imaginatively projects into the future, the otherworldly height of an incorruptible, immaterial soul is replaced by the height of an imagined, future person. From this height, we are to look down on our present happiness, reason, virtue, justice, and compassion as aspects of our lives that ought to be overcome. While these aspects of life typically fill us with pride because they distinguish us from apes and other lower forms of life (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3), just as our education might distinguish us from goatherds (*Z*:I "Prologue" 5), in great contempt we experience extreme dissatisfaction with even these distinguishing traits and aim to overcome them. It is because of this link between great contempt and self-*enhancement* that Zarathustra regards it as the self-critical stance constitutive of true self-love. In this state, we love the ideal that lies within us, and from the standpoint of its future realization, contemn the present reality that falls short of it.

The intimate connection between great contempt and the loving pursuit of an ideal higher than oneself sheds some light on why Zarathustra would describe such contempt as "the greatest experience you can have (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3). Considered objectively, this yearning to overcome oneself as one presently exists is the mark of will to power, which Zarathustra identifies as the essence of life and the root of all value (*Z*:I "Goals", *Z*:II "Self-Overcoming"). Though Zarathustra never explicitly connects great contempt, self-overcoming, and will to power, that connection is clearer in Nietzsche's later writings. Here is his most detailed discussion of how the will to power generates contempt and thereby shapes the person who possesses this "force":

> Here the material upon which the form giving and ravishing nature of this force [of will to power] vents itself is the person itself, its whole ancient animal self and *not*, as in that greater and more obvious phenomenon, some *other* person, *other* people. This secret self ravishment, this artists' cruelty, this delight in imposing a form upon oneself as a hard, recalcitrant,

that can bestow on the soul, not only a clear, discriminating and contemptuous [*verachtenden*] view of itself, but also the desire to look beyond itself and to seek with all its might for a higher self as yet still concealed from it" (*SE* 6). Here Nietzsche identifies a higher, hidden self as what we seek through self-love and self-contempt. What we are to love in ourselves is just this higher self, which offers a standpoint from which we can look down on ourselves as we currently exist.

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> suffering material and in burning a will, a critique, a contradiction, a contempt [*Verachtung*], a No into it, this uncanny, dreadfully joyous labor of a soul voluntarily at odds with itself that makes itself suffer out of joy in making suffer eventually this entire *active* "bad conscience" you will have guessed it as the womb of all ideal and imaginative phenomena, also brought to light an abundance of strange new beauty and affirmation. (*GM*II:18)

Nietzsche describes this phenomenon as an *active* bad conscience in order to distinguish it from the primitive bad conscience that emerges in human beings once they find themselves in social contexts that prohibit the expression of animalistic drives (see *GM* II:16, *GM* II:17). In both cases, human beings take a critical stance toward the drives that constitute them as persons – just as religious ascetics (whose guilt concerning their bodily drives develops out of this primitive bad conscience [see *GM* II:21]) aim to control those drives using any means necessary. But while the primitive bad conscience and the guilty conscience measure drives against a given standard of value, this active bad conscience is a painful dissatisfaction with oneself in relation to a self-imposed, "artistic" standard of character. The subject is *voluntarily* at odds with itself insofar as this dissatisfaction with its present state and its yearning to take on a new form both emerge from its own will. And it is this exercise of will that underlies an experience of the suffering associated with change as a "delight" or even a "joy" – the suffering marks growth toward an ideal.[18]

As integral to the joyous and veridical awareness of one's growth through self-fashioning, this variety of contempt is also experienced subjectively as great. Such greatness is wholly lacking in other forms of contempt for self. For example, ascetics whose contempt for themselves is grounded in a metaphysical denigration of everything bodily simply submit to what they regard as the objective authority of that standard of value. The same is true of those who contemn themselves for acting contrary to the moral law, or for living contrary to the standards of their place and time (i.e., the morality of mores). None of these people experiences the delight or joy that Nietzsche describes in the *Genealogy*, or that Zarathustra himself experiences. Just prior to his final confrontation with Life, Zarathustra says to himself, "O my soul, I taught you the contempt

[18] In a related discussion, Nietzsche states that in a human being, "*creature* and *creator* are united," and that we typically have too much compassion for the suffering creature, and not enough for the creator (*BGE* 225). In connection with *GM* II:18, we might say that Nietzsche values the characteristic delights and joys of the creator more highly than those of the creature.

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that does not come like the worm's gnawing, the great, the loving contempt that loves most where it contemns the most" (*Z*:III "Longing"). The greatness of this contempt is found, in part, in Zarathustra's experience of it as free from a gnawing feeling of lowliness.

To be sure, not every aspect of the subjective experience of great contempt is positive. Zarathustra describes the hour of great contempt as one "in which your happiness, too, arouses your disgust [*Ekel*], and even your reason and your virtue" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3). The disgust that is associated with all contempt surely *feels* unpleasant, though the presence of positive affects and attitudes would mitigate this negative aspect of great contempt. And it may be that by foregrounding the disgust constitutive of great contempt, Zarathustra means to emphasize that we should not look for the greatness of this state in the subjective experiences of pleasure or comfort, which Zarathustra derides as "wretched contentment" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3; see also *GS* 338). What matters is how this tension between what one is and what one yearns to become furthers the development of the subject.

8.4 The Role of Nobility

There is an additional aspect of great contempt that is merely implicit in Zarathustra's teaching, namely the pathos of distance constitutive of noble contempt. Nietzsche describes this element in his next work, *Beyond Good and Evil*, which is more concerned with the details of moral psychology and the historical origins of our values, practices, and attitudes. In this section, I will consider how Nietzsche's remarks on nobility and contempt in *Beyond Good and Evil* ought to shape our interpretation of Zarathustra's teaching of great contempt, which might otherwise appear as a straightforward inversion of religious-ascetic contempt that Zarathustra aims to achieve simply through his activity as a prophet.

Part Nine of *Beyond Good and Evil*, entitled "What is Noble," begins by considering a topic that is central to Zarathustra's first speech on the *Übermensch* and great contempt – the development of humanity beyond its present state. It begins with an assertion concerning the importance of social structure for human enhancement: "Every enhancement of the type 'human' [*jede Erhöhung des Typus 'Mensch'*] has so far been the work of an aristocratic society" (*BGE* 257). Nietzsche's ultimate concern here is not social, but psychological. He wants to consider how the order of rank that structures an aristocratic society, and the feeling of difference in social rank that he calls the "pathos of distance," serve as preconditions and building

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blocks for psychological states that promote the enhancement of humanity:

> Without that *pathos of distance* which grows out of the ingrained difference between strata – when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance – that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either – the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further stretching, more comprehensive states – in brief, simply the enhancement of the type "human", the continual "self overcoming of the human", to use a moral formula in a supra moral sense. (*BGE* 257)

Nietzsche describes the interpersonal relation of looking down on those who occupy lower social strata as a predecessor and precondition of the intrapersonal relation that interests him.[19] While he does not use the term "contempt" here, a related discussion of the "ruling group" identifies contempt as that group's characteristic attitude and asserts that for them, "'good' and 'bad' means approximately the same as 'noble' and 'contemptible'" (*BGE* 260). Thus it is reasonable to read *BGE* 257 as contrasting two varieties of contempt – interpersonal aristocratic contempt and an intrapersonal contempt that at least closely resembles Zarathustra's great contempt. Nietzsche's principal idea here is that the contemptuous feeling that one's present state ought to be overcome in pursuit of a higher state is a descendent of the aristocratic belief that lower castes exist for the sake of the higher. In addition to taking on a new object, namely *oneself*, this intrapersonal contempt acquires two novel characteristics in relation to aristocratic contempt. First, while the difference between castes is "ingrained," – that is, experienced as simply given and objective – the distance between aspects of the subject is something that one craves and always seeks to develop.[20] Second, and relatedly, the height from which one feels contempt for oneself is always as-yet-unrealized and imaginatively projected into the future. This is how a noble contempt *for oneself*, which might appear to be a contradiction in terms (see Section 8.1), first becomes

[19] It is not clear exactly what relation Nietzsche postulates between these two forms of contempt. See Alfano (2018: 133).

[20] There is a hint of paradox in Nietzsche's characterization of this intrapersonal contempt as involving both the *pursuit* of an ideal and the attempt to *increase* our separation from our ideals by creating "ever new widening of distances within the soul itself" (*BGE* 257). How could we aim both to bridge this gulf *and* to expand it? Nietzsche's answer would surely appeal to the notion of self-overcoming, which he characterizes as essential to understanding life as a pursuit of ends that is also "an opposition to ends" (*Z*:II "Self-Overcoming").

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possible. The height of humanity that constitutes nobility is no longer found in the existent traits of a higher caste, but rather in the merely imagined traits of a higher form of life. In this way, the relation of "obedience and command" previously located within a relatively static social structure can fuel the growth and development of an individual.[21]

Nietzsche explicitly connects these notions of a noble height and noble contempt with an ascetic-religious relation to oneself in his remark concerning the "self-overcoming of the human." This new, intrapersonal contempt fuels self-overcoming in a "supra-moral" (*übermoralisch*) sense insofar as it does not employ the religious-ascetic ideal of controlling and starving the human body in order to liberate the immaterial soul, but rather the earthly ideal of continual growth and development of the human being – either as individual, or as species. Of course, there are important formal similarities between these two varieties of contempt. Both involve looking down on what is merely "given" or "animal" in us. Zarathustra, for example, laments that too much in humanity remains "ape" or "worm" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3), and Nietzsche describes what is shaped by our self-fashioning activity as the "whole ancient animal self" (*GM* II:18). And we might say that both varieties of contempt attach a bad conscience to aspects of us that appear lowly and thereby spur us to overcome these aspects by working on ourselves. But once the metaphysical height of religious-ascetic contempt is replaced by an imagined future height of human (or *super*-human) excellence, this contempt takes on a new character. The self-overcoming of the human becomes the enhancement of embodied capacities, not their control or elimination. And our present state comes to be regarded as the raw material (*GM* II:18) or instrument (*BGE* 257) for this task – or as Zarathustra would express it, something valuable only as a "rope" or "bridge" to the future (*Z*:I P:4).[22] Nietzsche sums up this contrast between the opposed ideals of Zarathustra and the religious-ascetic priest at the end of the second essay of the *Genealogy*, in

[21] Some potentially disturbing qualities of aristocratic society even seem virtuous in the context of noble contempt for oneself. For example, while an aristocratic indifference to the suffering of those who occupy lower social strata might strike us as objectionably cold, an indifference to one's own suffering seems both permissible and integral to the task of pursuing an ideal. Thus one could condemn Nietzsche's interest in aristocratic noble contempt as anti-egalitarian (as does Bell 2013: 145–147) and still advocate the intrapersonal noble contempt that emerges from it.

[22] This way of valuing of our embodied capacities, which lies between the religious-ascetic rejection of them and the modern satisfaction with them that Zarathustra aims to undermine, is roughly a matter of taking them to possess instrumental value. A more complete description of their value would need to take into account that in self-overcoming we do "love" what exists (presumably as more than a mere instrument) even as we "oppose" it (*Z*:II "Self-Overcoming").

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which he describes Zarathustra as "the *redeeming* person of great love and contempt" who will replace our religious-ascetic fixation on the beyond with a creative engagement with reality (*GM* III:24).

The role of noble height in the contempt for self that Nietzsche recommends is not explicit in *Zarathustra* itself, though in his first speech Zarathustra provides an excellent example of craving "the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further-stretching, more comprehensive states" (*BGE* 257). By advocating contempt for oneself from the standpoint of the *Übermensch*, which is imagined to exist in the distant future and to bear the same developmental relation to humanity that humanity bears to the ape (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3), he means to introduce an evaluative standpoint that exceeds anything available to his listeners. From that standpoint, they are to regard the human being as "a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 3), and thus something that ought to "go under" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 4). The connection between nobility and great contempt is clearer in *The Antichrist*, in which Nietzsche ascribes to his ideal reader two marks of nobility – love for oneself and reverence for oneself (*A* "Preface"; see also *BGE* 287; *CW* "Epilogue"). He then introduces a third feature of his ideal reader, namely contempt for humanity itself: "One must be above humanity in strength, in *loftiness* of soul—in contempt" (*A* "Preface"). Both of these instances of great contempt target our present existence simply qua human beings.

In other contexts, including his revision of the biblical maxim "love thy neighbor" (*Z*:III "Virtue" 3), Zarathustra advocates contempt for self of the same variety – a transposition of religious-ascetic contempt – but of a lesser degree insofar as the standpoint from which we contemn is located closer to the present.[23] From the standpoint of a particular, higher self that we might become, we contemn ourselves not as human beings, but as individuals. Regardless of which form our great contempt takes, it spurs the overcoming of our present traits and capacities in the direction of future heights.

[23] Zarathustra clearly describes as great contempt some relations to oneself that do not employ the evaluative standpoint of the *Übermensch*, and do not target one's humanity as such (see also *Z*:I "Criminal"). However, it could be that in speaking of great contempt in the Prologue, Zarathustra means to designate a contempt that is both of the variety he advocates *and* of a maximal degree insofar as it employs the standpoint of the *Übermensch*. While the texts are unclear, I find it significant that of the multiple varieties of contempt, only Zarathustra's transposition of religious-ascetic contempt fuels the self-overcoming of individuals in the direction of the *Übermensch*. This arguably marks any degree of this contempt as "great."

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This connection between great contempt and the value of self-overcoming underlies Zarathustra's implicit adoption of great contempt as the standard of nobility that he himself employs in his interactions with others. In short, Zarathustra loves and contemns in response to *another's* ability to love and contemn, and not in response to any particular human trait. He states, for example, "I love those with great contempt [*die grossen Verachtenden*] because they are the great reverers [*die grossen Verehrenden*] and arrows of longing for the other shore" (*Z*:I "Prologue" 4).[24] And following his failed attempt to move the masses, he returns to this standard in remarking to the higher human beings who still fall short of his expectations, "that you contemn [*verachten*], you higher humans, that lets me hope" (*Z*:IV "Higher Humans" 3). In contrast, Zarathustra regards the figure he calls "the last human [*der letzte Mensch*]" as the "most contemptible" of all human beings (*Z*:I "Prologue" 5). As a figure wholeheartedly content with its lowly enjoyment of small pleasures, the last human longs for nothing, experiences no internal tension, and has no standpoint from which it might bear a critical relation to itself.[25] It represents one possible endpoint of the development of humanity, which means that in relation to Zarathustra's longing to overcome humanity, the last human can only be an impediment.

8.5 Conclusion

I have argued that we should understand the great contempt that Zarathustra recommends to us as a descendent of the religious-ascetic contempt described in his first speech and the noble contempt that Nietzsche considers in greater detail in later works. Great contempt trades the otherworldly standpoint from which the religious ascetic looks down on everything that is "body" or "world" for the earthly standpoint of a higher self, or higher form of life, from which we look down on the present day. While simply *as* contempt this state is

[24] This connection between contempt and a future-oriented attitude also appears in the self-description of the youth whom Zarathustra counsels: "My contempt and my longing [*Sehnsucht*] grow at the same time; the higher I climb, the more I contemn the climber" (*Z*:I "Mountainside").

[25] It is likely no coincidence that Zarathustra first introduces the great contempt as a relation to one's happiness, characterized as "poverty and filth and wretched contentment" (*Z*:I P:3). The danger he sees in his time (which of course resembles our time) is that all too many people seek out the happiness of small pleasures and regard inner tension or critical assessment of oneself as states to be avoided.

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characterized by disgust with our present existence, and thus cannot be an unalloyed joy, it remains for Zarathustra the greatest experience we can have due to the creative self-overcoming it makes possible. It is a state we may wish to cultivate even independent of Zarathustra's project of overcoming humanity itself.[26]

[26] I am grateful to Keith Ansell-Pearson, Brad Cokelet, Paul Loeb, and Gene McHam for their comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

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CHAPTER 9

The Great Politics of Thus Spoke Zarathustra

Paul Franco

Thus Spoke Zarathustra is in many ways Nietzsche's most political work, with *Beyond Good and Evil* running a close second. It marks a departure from the relatively apolitical ideal of the free spirit that animates Nietzsche's middle works and ushers in the concern with "great politics" that pervades his later works.[1] In *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche seeks to redeem modern European humanity from its nihilistic predicament by establishing a common goal for it to pursue, namely, the *Übermensch*, as well as a ruling class to help bring this goal about. The idea of the eternal recurrence plays a crucial role in the latter regard, serving as the great cultivating idea for the new ruling class. Much of the drama of *Zarathustra* revolves around the eponymous hero's struggle to overcome his compassion for humanity as he assumes the heavy burden of teaching the terrible idea from which many will "bleed to death" (*KSA* 10:16[51]).[2]

In keeping with the dramatic character of the work, Zarathustra's understanding of the task he has undertaken develops and deepens over the course of the book. In a note from 1882 to 1883, Nietzsche highlights the developmental character of *Zarathustra*: "Zarathustra growing progressively greater—his teaching progressively unfolding along with this increasing greatness" (*KSA* 10:4[127]). A major part of Zarathustra's development consists in his overcoming his reluctance to rule and his acceptance of political responsibility. It is this political drama that I follow in this essay.

[1] A recent article that explores the relationship between *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* and Nietzsche's great politics is Loschenkohl (2020). Loschenkohl argues that Nietzsche's great politics in *Zarathustra* involve a bottom-up process by which a people collectively overcomes itself and gives itself new values. My interpretation goes in a much less democratic direction, attempting to do justice to the aristocratic dimension of Nietzsche's great politics without endorsing the "aristocratic radical" interpretation that takes Nietzsche to be defending actual aristocratic political institutions (see note 16).

[2] The following translations are used in this chapter: *A* (1990); *BGE* (1989); *CWFN* (2019, 2020); *D* (1997); *EH* (1968); *GS* (1974); *GSt* (2007); *HH* (1996); *SE* (1997); *TI* (1968); *UM* (1997); *Z* (1954).

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The aristocratic idea of a "new nobility" with which the drama culminates nevertheless leaves many questions unanswered. What exactly does the rule of this new nobility involve? What is its relationship to the many and to democracy in general? To answer these questions, I draw on *Beyond Good and Evil* and some of Nietzsche's later notebook entries. I conclude that while these sources certainly help to clarify the great politics of *Zarathustra*, they do not necessarily resolve all the problems that bedevil them.

9.1 A New Political Goal

The political character of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* announces itself in the opening section of the book (which, slightly modified, is also the concluding section of the 1882 edition of *The Gay Science*). Zarathustra has lived for ten years as a free spirit in the solitude of his mountain cave acquiring knowledge. He now declares that he is sick of his (gay) wisdom, "like a bee that has gathered too much honey; I need hands outstretched to receive it. I would give away and distribute, until the wise among men find joy once again in their folly, and the poor in their riches" (*Z:*I "Prologue" 1). Zarathustra's desire to give to others here contrasts sharply with the birdlike aloofness of the free spirit; and his beneficence is further amplified in the next section when he tells the saint that he loves man and brings him a gift (*Z:*I "Prologue" 2). Zarathustra is no longer content merely to pursue knowledge; he seeks to redeem humanity from the terrible illness that afflicts it.

This illness is, of course, the nihilism that results from the death of God. The latter event, which Nietzsche evoked in all its terrifying reality in the aphorism on the madman in *The Gay Science* (125), is mentioned in *Zarathustra* merely as an aside after the eponymous hero's encounter with the saint.[3] Its potential consequences, however, are clearly depicted in Zarathustra's portrait of the contemptible "last man," who has no ideals or goals to strive or die for, is without love or longing, and seeks only "wretched contentment" (*Z:*I "Prologue" 3, 5). It is to avert this nihilistic goallessness that Zarathustra brings his gift of a new goal to strive and die for, namely, the *Übermensch*. "All beings so far," Zarathustra declaims to the people gathered in the marketplace, "have created something beyond themselves." Such self-overcoming, we learn later in the book, is the essence of life. The pursuit of comfortable self-preservation *à la* the last

[3] Based on some of the entries in his notebooks, Nietzsche seems originally to have thought of this aphorism as part of *Zarathustra* (see *KSA* 9:12[21, 77, 157]).

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man contradicts this fundamental will of life, which is the will to power. Therefore, man as he currently exists is "something that shall be overcome." Hence the need for the *Übermensch* or "overman" (*Z:*I "Prologue" 3; *Z*:II "Self-Overcoming").[4]

The concept of the *Übermensch* has, of course, been a source of considerable confusion in the reception of Nietzsche's philosophy, conjuring up images of a biological master race, not to mention a comic-book superhero. But for Nietzsche it refers primarily to the great human being, the human being with the most comprehensive soul that contains the greatest amount of diversity, opposition, and struggle without falling into disunity (see *EH* Z:6; *Z:*III "Tablets" 19). Such great human beings or *Übermenschen* have been produced in the past by accident – Goethe, for example – but it is only now, after the death of God, that their creation becomes the self-conscious goal of humanity (see *A* 3, 4).[5] Hitherto the goal of humanity has been to preserve the species at the expense of the individual. Now, Nietzsche writes, "the goal can be set higher": no longer merely to preserve mankind but to overcome it (*KSA* 10:7[21, 238]). The goal is to produce the most manifold and therefore most powerful individual or group of individuals. Instead of serving merely as a means, the individual is now to be made the "*fruit* of the communal entity" (*KSA* 10:7 [258]; see also *KSA* 12:7[6]).

When Zarathustra presents his gift of the *Übermensch* to the people, he is met with laughter and derision. By the end of the Prologue, he resolves never to speak to the people at large again but only to companions. It is to the search for the right companions with which to pursue the goal of the

[4] In what follows, I reject Laurence Lampert's claim that the teaching on the *Übermensch* in *Zarathustra* is a merely provisional teaching that is ultimately rendered obsolete by the teaching on the eternal recurrence (Lampert 1986: 19–21, 80–82, 258). Without the new ideal of the *Übermensch*, the idea of the eternal recurrence would be unendurable, the endless repetition of wastefulness, pointlessness, and meaningless, in accordance with the teaching of the Soothsayer. Only the *Übermensch* is capable of fully affirming and incorporating the idea of the eternal recurrence. See also Pippin, who treats the idea of the *Übermensch* ironically as a "solution that deconstructs itself" (1988: 56).

[5] The translators of Nietzsche's *Unpublished Fragments from the Period of Thus Spoke Zarathustra* reject the identification of the *Übermensch* with individual great human beings like Goethe, Napoleon, and Cesare Borgia, arguing instead that it refers to a "new and future species that will be superior to the human species" (Loeb and Tinsley 2019). I do not see these two interpretations of the *Übermensch* as being necessarily in conflict with one another, unless one takes "species" in a literal, Darwinian sense. The *Übermensch* certainly represents a new, higher type of human being, as different from current human beings as the latter are from apes. But what differentiates *Übermenschen* from present-day human beings is that they are individuals in the great, exceptional sense delineated by Nietzsche throughout his writings. Such individuals (e.g., Goethe, Napoleon, Caesar) have existed in the past as lucky accidents, but they have never been consciously willed or bred as a "species" (again see *A* 3, 4). This is the project of *Zarathustra* and of Nietzsche's great politics in general.

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Übermensch that the rest of *Zarathustra* is devoted. This again points to the political dimension of the book. After his initial failure to persuade the masses, Zarathustra searches for the appropriate audience for his teaching, the relevant political community that can join with him to produce the *Übermensch*. In the end, he does not find it and realizes that he must create such a community; he must, in other words, become a founder. This is the political significance of the subtitle of *Zarathustra*: *A Book for All and None*. Zarathustra begins by addressing his teaching of the *Übermensch* to everyone but ends up reserving it for a group of companions, a "new nobility," that does not yet exist but must be created.

Apart from the Prologue, the most politically significant sections of Part I are "The New Idol" and "On the Thousand and One Goals." In the first, Zarathustra famously describes the modern state as the "coldest of all cold monsters." It is, of course, the liberal state that he has in mind. Nietzsche's antipathy for the liberal state goes all the way back to his earliest writing on politics, "The Greek State," where he describes it as merely guaranteeing the "most undisturbed coexistence possible" so that everyone can "pursue their own purposes without restriction." Instead of representing an end for which individuals sacrifice themselves, the liberal state is viewed as a mere means for people to achieve their selfish aims (*GSt* 182–183). In "The New Idol," Zarathustra contrasts this instrumental understanding of the state with what he calls a "people." Unlike a people, which is animated by a faith, a love, a table of good and evil above it, the liberal state merely guarantees peace and allows individuals to pursue happiness in their own way. Coldly, it hangs a "a sword and a hundred appetites" over the superfluous many, but it does not specify a goal, a love, a value to give their lives meaning. Instead of a singular table of good and evil, the state accommodates all such tables and thereby becomes a "confusion of tongues of good and evil" (*Z*:I "New Idol").

With his talk of "peoples," though, Zarathustra does not mean to induce a romantic longing for the warmth of premodern community as an escape from the rootlessness of atomistic modern society. He makes this clear in "On a Thousand and One Goals," where, after defining a people in terms of a collective esteeming and valuing based on what it finds difficult and has overcome through its "will to power," he comments that, whereas at first peoples were the creators of values, now it is individuals; and he adds that "the individual is himself the most recent creation." In the past, "peoples hung a tablet of good over themselves"; the good conscience was identified with the community or herd, and the bad conscience with the ego. For Nietzsche, this is what differentiates the premodern morality of

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custom from modern moral sensibility (see *D* 9; *GS* 117). The task now is to go beyond the parochial morality of peoples and establish an overarching goal for humanity. Thus Zarathustra pronounces: "A thousand goals have there been so far, for there have been a thousand peoples. Only the yoke for the thousand necks is still lacking: the one goal is lacking. Humanity still has no goal" (*Z:*I "Goals").[6] It is just such an overarching goal or ideal that he aims to provide with his teaching about the *Übermensch*.

9.2 The Transition to Ruling

Part II of *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* begins very much like Part I, with Zarathustra back in the solitude of his mountain cave. As in Part I, his wisdom has grown to the point that, overfull, he seeks to give to others, specifically to the friends he left behind rather than to the masses at large. Unlike in Part I, he awakes from a bad dream in which he sees that his "*teaching* is in danger," having been distorted by his enemies. Zarathustra resolves that he must go down again and help his friends. He is not at all unhappy to do so, for his "impatient love overflows in rivers, downward, toward sunrise and sunset . . . Let the river of my love plunge where there is no way! How could a river fail to find its way to the sea?" Zarathustra welcomes the opportunity to rearticulate and expand upon his teaching for his friends, for "a new speech comes to me; weary I grow, like all creators, of the old tongues. My spirit no longer wants to walk on worn soles" (*Z:*II "Child with Mirror").

Zarathustra does not immediately indicate in what way his teaching has been distorted by his enemies. Instead, he goes to his friends on the Blessed Isles and elaborates on his teaching of the *Übermensch*. He makes even clearer now than he did in Part I that the *Übermensch* is the successor to the ideal of God: "Once one said God when one looked upon distant seas; but now I have taught you to say: *Übermensch*" (*Z:*II "Blessed Isles"). As Nietzsche puts it in a note from the time of *Zarathustra*: "God is dead: and it is time for the *Übermensch* to live" (*KSA* 10:4[132]; see also *Z:*IV "Higher Man" 2). But in his speech on the Blessed Isles, Zarathustra focuses less on the fact that God is dead and more on the fact that he is a

[6] Loschenkohl problematically argues that, even though Nietzsche denies that peoples are any longer the creators of values, this does not mean that "overcoming won't become a collective process once again, if *circumstances change*. Just as overcoming and creating once was a collective task for ancient peoples, so it might be once again in newly emerging peoples that constitute themselves beyond the modern state" (Loschenkohl 2020: 30; see also 39–41).

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conjecture that reaches beyond the creative will of human beings. The will to truth demands that our conjectures be limited to what is "thinkable for man, visible for man, feelable for man." But even more damning for the conjecture of God is that it idealizes "the One and the Plenum and the Unmoved and the Sated and the Permanent" and thus denies the value of impermanence, which is the very condition of human creativity. "Creation," Zarathustra declares, "is the great redemption from suffering, and life's growing light. But that the creator may be, suffering is needed and much change." Therefore, creators "are the advocates and justifiers of all impermanence." Anticipating what he is going to say later about self-overcoming, Zarathustra states that he has already passed through a hundred souls, and it is in just this sort of Protean self-transformation that human liberty consists (*Z:*II "Blessed Isles").

At the end of his speech on the Blessed Isles, Zarathustra returns to the political dimension of his teaching about the creative will. Such a will does not rest content with ceaseless self-transformation and self-creation, at least not in Zarathustra's case. Rather, it impels him "ever again toward man; thus is the hammer impelled toward stone." As he develops this image of the sculptor, Zarathustra highlights the violence and cruelty involved in the *Übermensch* project: "O men, in the stone there sleeps an image . . . Alas that it must sleep in the hardest, ugliest stone! Now my hammer rages cruelly against its prison. Pieces of rock rain from the stone: what is that to me? I want to perfect it; for a shadow came to me . . . The beauty of the *Übermensch* came to me as a shadow" (*Z:*II "Blessed Isles"; see also *KSA* 10:10[25]). The violence and cruelty contained in this image become increasingly prominent as the drama of *Zarathustra* unfolds.

After further elaborating on various aspects of his teaching – pity, priests, virtue, and the rabble – Zarathustra finally comes to the distortion he mentioned at the outset of Part II in his speech "On the Tarantulas." He uses the image of the tarantula to characterize the "preachers of equality" – Nietzsche also uses it in relation to the arch egalitarian, Rousseau (see *D* P:3). Like the tarantula, the preachers of equality are motivated by revenge: "Revenge sits in your soul: wherever you bite, black scabs grow; your poison makes the soul whirl with revenge." As Nietzsche does in his later discussions of slave morality, Zarathustra here traces the drive for equality back to impotence and *ressentiment*. And he is especially concerned that his own teaching about the creative will of the individual not be confused with any sort of egalitarianism. "Some preach my doctrine of life and are at the same time preachers of equality and tarantulas," he declares. "I do not wish to be mixed up and confused with the preachers of

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equality. For to *me* justice speaks thus: 'Men are not equal.' Nor should they become equal. What would my love of the *Übermensch* be if I spoke otherwise" (*Z*:II "Tarantulas"; see also *BGE* 44).

Here we arrive at one of the central pillars of Nietzsche's political philosophy – its rejection of equality and, along with it, democracy – and it is important to understand the reasoning behind it. In this regard, it is significant that Zarathustra not only denies that men *are* equal but that they *should be* equal. His teaching about life is that it involves constant self-overcoming; it requires opposition, contest, war, and victory. Inequality is inherent in this process: there is no overcoming without something to overcome, without something to stand victorious over and look down upon. Zarathustra makes this point in one of Nietzsche's most revealing passages on why there needs to be inequality: "Life wants to build itself up into the heights with pillars and steps; it wants to look into vast distances and out toward stirring beauties; therefore it requires height. And because it requires height, it requires steps and contradictions among the steps and the climbers. Life wants to climb and to overcome itself climbing" (*Z*:II "Tarantulas").

Zarathustra's teaching about life receives its definitive statement in his speech "On Self-Overcoming," where he finally identifies it with the will to power. This crucial concept in Nietzsche's philosophy is mentioned seven times in this speech, as opposed to twice in the rest of *Zarathustra*. In his earlier speech "On the Thousand and One Goals," Zarathustra speaks of the will to power in relation to the esteeming activity of peoples: "A tablet of good and evil hangs over every people. Behold, it is the tablet of their overcomings; behold, it is the voice of their will to power" (*Z*:I "Goals"). In "On Self-Overcoming," he continues to identify the will to power with such esteeming activity or value creation. It is philosophers, those "who are wisest," who are most responsible for legislating values, even though they usually misunderstand their creative activity in terms of the will to truth. In this sense, philosophy represents the "most spiritual will to power" (*BGE* 9; see also *BGE* 211). Driven by their will to power, philosophers also are responsible for destroying old values as they create new ones. For this reason, Zarathustra says that:

> good and evil that are not transitory, do not exist. Driven on by themselves, they must overcome themselves again and again. With your values and words of good and evil you do violence when you value . . . But a more violent force and a new overcoming grow out of your values and break egg and eggshell. And whoever must be a creator in good and evil, verily, he must first be an annihilator and break values. Thus the highest evil belongs to the highest goodness: but this is creative. (*Z*:II "Self Overcoming")

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Zarathustra's speech "On Self-Overcoming" plays a pivotal role in Part II and, indeed, in *Zarathustra* as whole. It sums up his teaching about the will, freedom, creativity, and self-overcoming to this point, encapsulating it in the concept of the will to power. But by tying this teaching specifically to the value-creating, legislative activity of the philosopher, the speech also prepares for the supreme act of philosophical legislation that is to come. As a creator of new values, Zarathustra must destroy the old ones. In this respect, he must appear violent, cruel, and in the highest sense evil. This is the burden that weighs him down in the rest of Part II and into Part III.

With his speech "On Self-Overcoming," Zarathustra begins to approach the heart of his philosophical great politics. But before he can present the central idea of that politics, namely, the idea of the eternal recurrence, he needs to make clear the sort of great politics he does not have in mind. This he does in his conversation with the fire hound in "On Great Events." The fire hound is the emblem of the revolutionary spirit in Europe that seeks to overthrow all the institutions of society in the name of freedom. Nietzsche's hostility to this revolutionary spirit, which he traces back to Rousseau and associates primarily with socialism and anarchism, goes all the way back to *Human, All too Human* (see *HH* 463, 475). With respect to such revolutionary "scum and overthrow devils," Zarathustra states: "Freedom is what all of you like best to bellow; but I have outgrown the belief in 'great events' wherever there is much bellowing and smoke." And he follows this with his own view of what constitutes a great event and hence great politics, namely, philosophical legislation: "Believe me, friend Hellishnoise: the greatest events—they are not our loudest but our stillest hours. Not around the inventors of new noise, but around the inventors of new values does the world revolve; it revolves *inaudibly*" (*Z*:II "Great Events").

The chapter "On Great Events" begins with the strange image of Zarathustra's flying *Doppelgänger* announcing, "It is time! It is high time!" and it ends with Zarathustra asking, "High time for *what*?" (*Z*:II "Great Events"). The next two chapters, "The Soothsayer" and "On Redemption," begin to answer the latter question. In the first, a soothsayer foresees the coming nihilism and the sense of weariness that accompanies it: "And I saw a great sadness descend upon mankind. The best grew weary of their works. A doctrine appeared, accompanied by a faith: 'All is empty, all is the same, all has been." The sea of faith has withdrawn, the Christian God has died, and all that remains is a depressing sense of meaningless and the "in vain." Zarathustra himself is depressed by this prophecy, for he sees that it threatens his teaching of the creative will and the *Übermensch*: "Alas,

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how shall I save my light through [this long twilight of nihilism]?" he asks. "It must not suffocate in this sadness. For it shall be a light for distant worlds and even more distant nights" (Z:II "Soothsayer").

Zarathustra begins to discern the answer to his question in the following chapter, "On Redemption," which marks the climax of Part II. The chapter begins with a rearticulation of Zarathustra's teaching on the creative will and the *Übermensch*. Encountering a group of cripples at a bridge and telling one of them that he has seen even worse, inverse cripples or hypertrophic geniuses who have "too little of everything and too much of one thing," Zarathustra comments to his disciples: "Verily, my friends, I walk among men as among the fragments and limbs of men. This is what is terrible for my eyes, that I find man in ruins and scattered as over a battlefield or a butcher-field. And when my eyes flee from the now to the past, they always find the same: fragments and limbs and dreadful accidents—but no human beings." Nietzsche uses this same image of fragments of human beings scattered over a field in "Schopenhauer as Educator," where he imagines the fragments calling out: "come, assist, complete, bring together what belongs together, we have an immeasurable longing to become whole" (*SE* 6).[7] Zarathustra, too, speaks of the desire to gather together the fragments of men to create a whole human being: "And this is all my creating and striving, that I create and carry together into One what is fragment and riddle and dreadful accident" (Z:II "Redemption"). A couple of entries from Nietzsche's notebooks provide helpful glosses on this passage and connect it more explicitly to Zarathustra's teaching of the *Übermensch*. In one, he declares that "most men represent pieces and fragments of man: one has to add them up for a complete man to appear." The task of history is precisely to unite the fragments that have developed separately over the course of human evolution in order to produce the "synthetic man" (*KSA* 12:10[111]). In another note, Nietzsche claims that a "single individual can under certain circumstances justify the existence of whole millennia—that is, a full, rich, great, whole human being in relation to countless incomplete fragmentary men" (*KSA* 11:27[16]).

Zarathustra now ties all this back to the theme of the chapter: "To redeem those who lived in the past and to recreate all 'it was' into a 'thus I willed it'—that alone should I call redemption." But standing in the way of such redemption is the fact the will that liberates is itself "still a

[7] This image originally comes from Ralph Waldo Emerson's "The American Scholar" (Emerson 1983: 54).

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prisoner." This is the meaning of Zarathustra's dream about becoming a night watchman and guardian of tombs: "Powerless against what has been done, [the will] is an angry spectator of all that is past. The will cannot will backwards; and that it cannot break time and time's covetousness, that is the will's loneliest melancholy." Unable to affect the past, the will turns vengefully against itself; and it is this vengefulness, according to Zarathustra, springing from the "will's ill will against time and its 'it was,'" that has been the source of all moral and religious doctrines hitherto, culminating in Schopenhauer's complete denial of the will and the nihilistic doctrine of the soothsayer (*Z*:II "Redemption"). The genuine redemption of humanity requires that the will be delivered from the spirit of revenge that springs from its inability to will backwards. As we find out in Part III, this is what the doctrine of the eternal recurrence seeks to accomplish.

The political bearing of all this is made explicit in the final chapter of Part II, "The Stillest Hour." Having understood what is necessary for redemption, Zarathustra resists speaking aloud the redemptive word of the eternal recurrence. His stillest hour—to which the greatest events belong, namely, the invention of new values—chastises him for refusing to assume the responsibility of commanding great things: "To do great things is difficult; but to command great things is more difficult. This is what is most unforgivable in you: you have the power, and you do not want to rule" (Z:II "Stillest Hour"). In his notebooks, Nietzsche explains that Zarathustra's reluctance here springs primarily from his concern for his friends and companions: "The *most profound suffering* is not for *his* own sake, but rather for the sake of those *dearest* to him who bleed to death on account of his doctrine" (*KSA* 10:16[51]). This is the most difficult part about ruling: it requires the imposition of suffering not only on oneself but on others: "*This is the problem for those who rule: they must sacrifice those they love to their ideal*" (*KSA* 10:16 [52]).

"The Stillest Hour" marks a crucial turning point in *Zarathustra*. Nietzsche describes it in his notebooks as the "*transition* from the *free spirit* to the *having to rule*" (*KSA* 10:16[51]). It is precisely this transition that constitutes the drama of Part III. To be a free spirit is no longer enough; Zarathustra must leave the Blessed Isles and accept the responsibility of ruling by teaching the horrific doctrine of the eternal recurrence. In a note on Part III, Nietzsche writes: "*Z* 3. *against the complacency of the sages*—against 'joyful science' [*fröhliche Wissenschaft*]. The downfall of the Blessed Isles awakens [Zarathustra]" (*KSA* 10:15[17]). And in another note, he explains why it is so difficult for Zarathustra to leave behind his

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free-spirited enjoyment of multiplicity: "To rule? Ghastly! I do not *want* to impose *my* type. My happiness is *multiplicity! Problem!* . . . against all *those who* merely *enjoy things* (*KSA* 10:15[21; see also *KSA* 10:16[86]). Zarathustra has reached a turning point that proves to be the turning point of history. He must give up merely enjoying things in order to teach the eternal recurrence, the hammer by which to bring about the *Übermensch* (see *KSA* 10:16[49]).

9.3 A New Aristocracy

Part III begins with Zarathustra leaving the comfort of the Blessed Isles and the pleasures of the free-spirited quest for knowledge. His greatest challenge lies before him: the challenge of ruling by teaching the idea of the eternal recurrence: "I stand before my final peak now and before that which has been saved up for me the longest. Alas, now I must face my hardest path." Only now, his stillest hour tells him, "are you going your way to greatness." We are reminded of Nietzsche's comment on the development of Zarathustra's character over the course of the book, how he grows "progressively greater—his teaching progressively unfolding along with this increasing greatness" (*KSA* 10:4[127]). A major part of this increasing greatness involves Zarathustra's overcoming of his compassion for his friends and disciples as he prepares to teach the doctrine from which they may "bleed to death." Again his stillest hour speaks to him: "Now what was gentlest in you must still become hardest. . .. Praised be what hardens!" (Z:III "Wanderer").

There follows, finally, the first – and the most fully developed – presentation of the idea of the eternal return. It is of crucial importance that Zarathustra presents the idea to the dwarfish spirit of gravity, the spirit of morality that has hitherto reigned supreme on earth and is Zarathustra's "devil and archenemy" (*Z*:III "Vision and Riddle"). The clear implication is that the idea of the eternal return is first and foremost designed to vanquish the spirit of gravity or morality. The idea that things are so knotted together that, given an infinite amount of time, they will combine and recombine in exactly the same way over and over again completely undermines the ideas of reason, purpose, and responsibility that undergird all ethical systems. All ethical teachers, Nietzsche tells us elsewhere, have come on the scene in order to make "what happens necessarily and always spontaneously and without any purpose . . . appear to be done for some purpose and strike man as rational and an ultimate commandment." They want to make sure that we take life seriously and "do not *laugh* at existence,

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or at ourselves" (*GS* 1). It is precisely this sort of tragic seriousness and gravity that the idea of the eternal return renders meaningless, restoring chance and innocence to things and delivering them from "their bondage under purpose" (*Z*:III "Sunrise").

Having vanquished the spirit of gravity, Zarathustra now has a vision of a young shepherd who is gagging on a black snake that has crawled down his throat. With this horrifying image Nietzsche conveys just how difficult it is for Zarathustra to incorporate the idea of the eternal recurrence. Earlier in the book, Zarathustra indicates that the "bite on which I gagged the most" was the thought that even the rabble is necessary for life (*Z*:II "Rabble"). And toward the end of Part III, he makes even clearer why he experiences such nausea at the idea of the eternal recurrence: "The great disgust with man—*this* choked me and had crawled into my throat . . . 'Eternally recurs the man of whom you are weary, the small man'—thus yawned my sadness" (Z:III "Convalescent" 2). But what is the meaning of the shepherd's biting off the head of the snake and spitting it out, and why does it lead to his transformation into a being that is "no longer shepherd, no longer human—one changed, radiant, *laughing*?" (*Z*:III "Vision and Riddle" 2). That Zarathustra here envisages the transformation of the shepherd into an *Übermensch* through the incorporation of the idea of the eternal recurrence seems clear,[8] but what does this have to do with the biting off and spitting out of the head of the snake? One possibility is that the incorporation of the idea of the eternal recurrence requires that Zarathustra accept the exclusion of the rabble from his redemptive project, that he abandon his hopes for the redemption of all – indeed, most – of humanity. On this view, the phrase "no longer shepherd" takes on added significance. In a number of his notes from the time of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche identifies the shepherd with the herd, even calling him the "gilded tool of the herd" (*KSA* 10:4[4]; see also *KSA* 10[18, 38, 241]). The *Übermensch* will play no such role in Zarathustra's political project.

In the chapter immediately following "On the Vision and the Riddle," Zarathustra's thoughts turn once again to his companions. The search for the right companions has been a leading theme of *Zarathustra* from the opening scene of the book when the eponymous hero disastrously presents his teaching of the *Übermensch* to the masses. Zarathustra now realizes that

[8] Commenting on the image of the shepherd biting off the head of the snake in a note, Nietzsche writes: "We created the weightiest thought—*now les us create the being* for whom the thought is light and blissful" (*KSA* 10:21[6]).

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the companions he desires do not exist but must first be created: "Companions the creator once sought, and the children of his hope; and behold, it turned out he could not find them, unless he first created them himself." Such creation involves strengthening and toughening up his former companions. Imagining his former companions as trees standing together in his garden on the Blessed Isles, he says: "one day I want to dig them up and place each by itself, so that it may learn solitude and defiance and caution. Gnarled and bent and with supple hardness it shall then stand by the sea, a living lighthouse of invincible life." It is by being exposed to the rough elements that each of Zarathustra's potential companions "shall be known and tested, whether he is of my kind and kin, whether he is the master of a long will, taciturn even when he speaks, and yielding so that in giving he receives—so that he may one day become a companion and fellow creator and fellow celebrant of Zarathustra" (*Z:*III "Involuntary Bliss").

The key test to determine whether someone is of Zarathustra's "kind and kin" is, of course, the idea of the eternal return of the same. Nietzsche does not state this explicitly in the text of *Zarathustra*, but in his notebooks from the time of its composition he repeatedly refers to the winnowing and cultivating function of the eternal recurrence, how it destroys the sick and the weak and strengthens the healthy and the strong (see *KSA* 10:7[238], 10[3], 16[41], 24 [7]; *KSA* 11:25[211, 227, 249, 335]). It is the "hammer" with which Zarathustra hopes to sculpt men and ultimately form a new aristocracy (see *KSA* 10:10[20, 25]; 1[48], 17[69], 21[6]; *KSA* 11:25[249]; 27[80, 82]; 34[78, 190]). Those who are unable to bear the idea of the eternal recurrence "stand condemned; those who find it the greatest benefit are chosen to rule" (*KSA* 11:26[376]). From the former, destructive consequence of the eternal recurrence come some of Nietzsche's most notorious statements about the "extermination of millions of failures" (see *KSA* 11:25[243, 249, 335]). The latter consequence points to the political dimension of the eternal recurrence, which serves as the "foundation of an oligarchy *above* peoples and their interests: education to a universally human politics" (*KSA* 10:24[4]).

The "oligarchy *above* peoples" referred to in this note is taken up by Zarathustra in his remarks on the "new nobility" in the important chapter "On Old and New Tablets." He introduces this topic in what seems a strange way, speaking of his "pity for all that is *past*: I see how all of it is abandoned . . . to the pleasure, the spirit, the madness of every generation, which comes along and reinterprets all that has been as a bridge to itself." A new nobility is needed to counter the democratic rabble's obliviousness of history, its abandonment of the spiritual inheritance of the past, and its

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reinterpretation of "all that has been as a bridge to itself." By focusing on its opposition to the rabble's despotism over history, thought, and culture, Zarathustra makes clear that he thinks of this new nobility in primarily cultural, rather than narrowly political, terms.[9] Paradoxically, he sees the new nobility's recuperation of the past as contingent on its orientation toward the future. Indeed, it is precisely this future orientation that differentiates the new nobility from the old: "O my brothers, your nobility should not look backward but ahead! . . . Your *children's land* shall you love: this love shall be your new nobility—the undiscovered land in the most distant sea. . . . In your children you shall make up for being the children of your fathers: thus shall you redeem all that is past" (*Z*:III "Tablets" 11–12).[10]

A little later in "On Old and New Tablets," Zarathustra makes clear that the new aristocracy he has described is ultimately destined to rule: "For, my brothers, the best should rule, the best also want to rule" (*Z*:III "Tablets" 21). But what exactly he means by "ruling" remains ambiguous.[11] In order to flesh it out, we must turn to *Beyond Good and Evil*, which contains perhaps the clearest statement of what Nietzsche understands an aristocratic society to be and why he finds it desirable:

> Every enhancement of the type "man" so far has been the work of an aristocratic society and it will be so again and again a society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences in value between man and man, and that needs slavery in some sense or other. Without that *pathos of difference* which grows out of the ingrained differ ence between strata when the ruling caste constantly looks afar and looks down upon subjects and instruments and just as constantly practices obedience and command, keeping down and keeping at a distance that other, more mysterious pathos could not have grown up either the craving for an ever new widening of distances within the soul itself, the development of ever higher, rarer, more remote, further stretching, more comprehensive states in brief, simply the enhancement of the type "man," the continual "self overcoming of man," to use a moral formula in a supra moral sense. (*BGE* 257)

[9] Strauss emphasizes the nonpolitical character of Nietzsche's conception of the new nobility and criticizes it for its abdication of political responsibility (2017: 152–154, 203–204).

[10] On the relation between the historical sense and future orientation, see *GS* 337, where Nietzsche mentions the idea of a "new nobility" for the first time (see also *KSA* 9:12[76]; *KSA* 15[17, 70]).

[11] One might look to Part IV of *Zarathustra* for further clarification, but in many ways this part merely repeats in a comic vein Zarathustra's fruitless quest for proper companions and fellow rulers. The higher men he encounters turn out to be "not high and strong enough" for the political task Zarathustra has in mind; they are not the "warriors" or "laughing lions" he requires (*Z*:IV "Welcome"). He concludes, disappointedly, that these higher men "are not my proper companions" (*Z*:IV "Sign").

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There are several things to note in this remarkable paragraph. First, the goal of Nietzsche's aristocratic great politics is the "enhancement of the type 'man,'" a phrase he repeats twice. His concern is not with the happiness of a few individuals but with what Daniel Conway calls the "fundamental question of political legislation: *what ought humankind to become?*"[12] Second, there is nothing in the paragraph to suggest that Nietzsche is concerned to establish aristocratic political institutions. For him, an aristocratic society is understood to be a "society that believes in the long ladder of an order of rank and differences between man and man," one that is characterized by the "pathos of distance" between strata. He mentions a "ruling caste" and "subjects," but the sort of rule he has in mind seems to be spiritual or cultural rather than strictly political. None of this is to suggest that Nietzsche is not defending aristocracy in some sense, only that he associates it primarily with a system of values, an ethical and cultural outlook, rather than a literal set of political institutions.[13]

Finally, and perhaps most troublingly, Nietzsche asserts that the enhancement of the type man requires "slavery in some sense or other." He is even more explicit in the aphorism that follows *BGE* 257, stating that in a healthy aristocracy an untold number of human beings must be sacrificed, "reduced to incomplete human beings, to slaves, to instruments," for the sake of the higher, more spiritual human beings" (*BGE* 258). Nietzsche, however, has a rather broad understanding of "slavery." In *Human, All too Human*, he defines a slave as anyone "who does not have two-thirds of his day to himself" (*HH* 283). And in a note from 1884, he claims that slavery exists in every society, "whether you want it or not: for example, the Prussian civil servant, the scholar, the monk" (*KSA* 11:25[225]). It is slavery in just this sort of sense that Nietzsche sees as gaining ground in Europe as a result of democracy. The process of democratization has created a "supra-national and nomadic type of man" who is eminently trainable, adaptable, and even intelligent. Such a "useful, industrious, handy, multi-purpose herd animal" is fit for "*slavery* in the subtlest sense" (*BGE* 242; *KSA* 11:26[449]).

Somewhat unexpectedly, Nietzsche sees an opportunity in the leveling and "dwarfing" tendencies of democracy. Indeed, he argues that there is a way in which the democratization of Europe is inadvertently creating conditions for a new and even more refined aristocracy: "The very same new conditions that will on average lead to the leveling and mediocritizing of man . . . are likely to give birth to exceptional human beings of a most

[12] Conway (1997: 3). [13] Clark (1999) makes this point very effectively.

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dangerous and attractive quality." The process of democratization thus serves as a training ground not only for "*slavery* in the subtlest sense" but for the "cultivation of *tyrants*" in the most spiritual sense (*BGE* 242; see also *KSA* 11:26[449]). Nietzsche even goes so far as to suggest that the development of a new aristocracy out of the democratic movement that creates the industrious, intelligent, and adaptable herd animal of Europe might constitute something like a justification of that movement: "And would it not be a kind of goal, redemption, and justification of the democratic movement itself if someone arrived who could make use of it —by finally producing beside its new and sublime development of slavery . . . a higher kind of dominating and Caesarian spirits who would stand upon it, maintain themselves by it, and elevate themselves through it?" (*KSA* 12:2[13]).

Here and elsewhere Nietzsche uses the image of base and superstructure (not in the Marxian sense) to describe the relationship between the few and the many. In *The Antichrist*, he speaks of high culture as a "pyramid" that requires a broad, sturdy base to support the lofty spiritual achievements of the few (*A* 57). And in a late note, he puts it this way: a high culture "can stand only upon a broad base, upon a strong and healthy consolidated mediocrity" (*KSA* 13:14[182]; see also *KSA* 12:9[1, 17]. Why is such a broad base necessary? In the first place, it serves to protect society against the destructive potential of great human beings, who are "dangerous, accidents, exceptions, tempests" that threaten to blow up "things slowly built and established" (*KSA* 12:9[137]; *GS* 76; *TI* "Expeditions" 44). Secondly, the great human being requires the "opposition of the masses . . . a feeling of distance from them! he stands on them, he lives off them" (*KSA* 12:9[17]).[14]

The base–superstructure analogy suggests something else about the relationship of the few to the many, namely, that the former do not "rule" or "lead" the latter in any sort of conventional political sense. A note from the time of *Zarathustra* brings this out nicely. Describing the relationship between the last men and the *Übermenschen*, Nietzsche writes: "The goal is **not** *at all* to conceive of the latter as the masters of the former: but rather: the two species should exist alongside one another—as segregated as

[14] Nietzsche's use of the base–superstructure analogy to understand the coexistence of democracy and aristocracy goes all the way back to *Human, All too Human* and its sequels. Contrary to scholars who claim that Nietzsche's support of democracy in his middle works contrasts sharply with his later great politics, I would argue that, even in his middle writings, Nietzsche's allegiance to democracy is purely instrumental and wholly in the service of aristocratic values (see especially *WS* 275). For a fuller defense of this position, see Franco (2014: 461–463).

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possible; the one like *the Epicurean gods, having no concern for the other*" (*KSA* 10:7[21]). This image of the aristocratic few and the mediocre many existing in separate spheres can be found in many of the notes from Nietzsche's later years. In one, he writes: "Main consideration: not to see the task of the higher species in leading the lower . . . but the lower as a base upon which the higher species performs its *own* tasks (*KSA* 12:9[44]; see also 13:16[39]). In another, he says of the "master race" excoriated by so many of Nietzsche's critics that it is not a race "whose sole task is to rule, but a race with its own sphere of life, with an excess of strength for beauty, bravery, culture, manners . . . a hothouse for strange and choice plants" (*KSA* 12:9 [153]). The "masters of the earth" do not seek to impose their values on the herd – what could their values have to do with the needs of the herd (*KSA* 12:7[6]; *KSA* 13:11[151])? – rather, they exist far apart from the herd, creating and self-legislating in their own sphere, working artistically on themselves as a means of enhancing the type "man" (*KSA* 12:2[57]).[15]

This interpretation of Nietzsche's great politics, which sees the aristocratic few and the mediocre many as existing in separate spheres having little to do with one another, contrasts sharply with "aristocratic radical" interpretation that views Nietzsche as literally advocating an aristocratic political system in which the gifted few rule over, manipulate, oppress, enslave, and sometimes even exterminate the mediocre many.[16] Indeed, it suggests that Nietzsche's aristocratic great politics are not necessarily incompatible with democracy. This is not to say that they are in any way democratic, as some scholars have maintained.[17] Like Tocqueville, Nietzsche regarded the "democratization of Europe [as] inevitable" (*WS* 275); and he even believed, as we saw above, that such democratization could provide a secure and durable foundation for his new nobility. But he never saw the former as anything more than instrumental to the latter; and he never doubted that the system of valuation belonging to his new aristocracy was utterly at odds with the democratic belief in equality. Nietzsche ultimately defends a cultural or spiritual aristocracy within democratic political institutions, with the former serving, again, as "a kind of goal, redemption, and justification of the democratic movement itself."

[15] On Nietzsche's vision of future society as consisting of two radically separate spheres, a high cultural one, and a lower democratic one, see Drochon (2017: 4, 20–21, 88–104).

[16] The *locus classicus* of this "aristocratic radical" interpretation of Nietzsche's politics is Detwiler (1990). For similar interpretations, see Dannhauser (1974: 29–31, 38–39); Dannhauser (1987: 848–849); Ansell-Pearson (1994: 39–44, 95–97, 148–155, 161–162); Abbey and Appel (1998); Appel (1999); Dombowsky (2004); Gillespie (2017: ix, xiii–xiv, 20–21, 38, 48, 59, 172–173, 176–177, 198–199).

[17] See Warren (1991); Connolly (1991); Honig (1993); Owen (1995); Hatab (1995).

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The question that inevitably confronts such an interpretation of Nietzsche's great politics is, what makes it political at all? If Nietzsche's new aristocracy is perfectly compatible with democratic political institutions, what difference politically does it make? There are two points to make in response. First, following from the quote above, Nietzsche's conception of a new nobility – and ultimately of the *Übermensch* – provides a goal that counters the nihilistic aimlessness of democracy and thereby serves as a kind of redemption and justification of it. Second, *Zarathustra* provides the means by which to educate, test, and cultivate a ruling caste – most importantly through the idea of the eternal return – and thereby establishes a kind of structure or institution of rule. In many ways, this structure or institution of rule resembles what Nietzsche elsewhere describes as a church. "A church," he writes in the fifth book of *The Gay Science*, "is above all a structure for ruling that secures the highest rank for the more spiritual human beings and that *believes* in the power of spirituality to the extent of forbidding itself the use of all the cruder instruments of force; and on this score the church is under all circumstances a *nobler* institution than the state" (*GS* 358).

While this perhaps resolves one of the difficulties surrounding Nietzsche's deeply ambiguous aristocratic great politics, it by no means answers them all. It remains extremely unclear just how these politics would actually work. The idea of a set of aristocratic values that is completely divorced from the surrounding democratic political institutions seems highly problematic from a sociological point of view. And the tremendous gulf between the mediocre many and the aristocratic few would seem not only to render the existence and influence of the latter quite precarious but also to destroy the possibility of any sort of common life. Finally, Nietzsche's preoccupation with culture and the cultivation of the individual, which he shares with the whole *Bildung* tradition of German thought going back to Humboldt and Goethe, leads him to neglect politics in the mundane, institutional, and utterly necessary sense.[18] We who live in the shadow of the atrocities of the twentieth century and the looming crises of the twenty-first do not have that luxury.[19]

[18] On the German *Bildung* tradition and its susceptibility to political irresponsibility, see Bruford (1975) and Lepenies (2006).

[19] Thanks to Keith Ansell-Pearson and Paul Loeb for their helpful comments on the first draft of this essay.

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CHAPTER 10

Joyful Transhumanism
Love and Eternal Recurrence in Nietzsche's Zarathustra

Gabriel Zamosc

10.1 Introduction: Toward a Joyful Transhumanism

Many have noticed that there are some affinities between the contemporary transhumanist movement and Nietzsche's philosophy of the *Übermensch* or the *superhuman*.[1] Perhaps Sorgner (2017a, 2017b, 2017c, 2017d)[2] is the commentator who has done the most to defend the view that these affinities are real and that they run deep. He believes that Nietzsche and the transhumanists share important similarities in fundamental principles and aims, particularly in their belief in the enhancement of humanity through the overcoming of human limitations. For Nietzsche this enhancement was to be achieved through cultural education. But given the structural analogy between education and technology, Sorgner concludes that Nietzsche probably would not have opposed the transhumanist goal of using technological enhancement in order to realize the superhuman (Sorgner 2017b: 42–43).

While I do not have qualms with the transhumanist aspiration to employ technological means to break human cognitive, emotional, or

[1] I will follow Loeb's and Tinsley's (2019) translation of *Übermensch* as *superhuman*. However, unlike them, I am not inclined to read the superhuman as the conception of a new superior species that can replace humanity. I interpret the superhuman as the ideal of a new spiritually superior type of human. In my view, we can think of the ideal as entreating us to develop the sort of profound spiritual qualities that would put a human being to shame, so that, much in the same way as today we would feel ashamed of perceiving in ourselves comportments that remind us of the spiritual limitations of being an ape, so too we would feel ashamed of discovering in ourselves comportments that remind us of the spiritual limitations of being human (*Z* P:3). Exploring these issues further is a topic for a different essay, but among the things this spiritual labor of enhancement might require is the overcoming of the default moral qualities that generally typify humankind, such as guilt, and, perhaps, compassion. In what follows, I provide an example of what the overcoming of guilt might entail. In my reading, the overcoming of these spiritual limitations does not constitute a radical break with our humanity that culminates in a new species. This is partly because – as I argued in Zamosc (2015b) – among the things that eternal recurrence might teach us is that the ideal of the superhuman is only imperfectly realizable.

[2] The debate is usefully collected in Tuncel (2017a).

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physical limitations in order to develop capacities that greatly exceed the maximum attainable by any currently living person (Bostrom 2008), I am skeptical about whether such a policy of enhancement would capture what Nietzsche meant by the superhuman. Like some scholars, I suspect that Nietzsche probably would have been a critic of much of the transhumanist movement, just as he criticized the modern science of his time (e.g., Ansell-Pearson 1997; Skowron 2013; Babich 2017). Nietzsche's criticisms of science, however, were not meant as an indictment of all science, for he thought we could become practitioners of a more joyful science. Similarly, the transhumanist movement could benefit from a fresh philosophical rapprochement with Nietzsche's philosophy so as to secure a joyful version of itself.

In this essay, I contend that securing such joyful transhumanism requires coming to terms with *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, which Nietzsche considered his most important book. In particular, following Loeb (2017a), I will argue that transhumanists cannot productively claim an affinity with Nietzsche's philosophy until they incorporate the doctrine of eternal recurrence, which some of them are reluctant to do (for example, More 2017). Sorgner himself, while conceding that transhumanists may benefit from taking eternal recurrence seriously, insists that the doctrine is not really necessary for achieving the movement's goals (Sorgner 2017c: 164). In the ensuing analysis, I hope to prove him wrong on that score.

My argument will proceed as follows: in Section 10.2, I discuss some of the ways in which *Zarathustra* calls attention to the worry of confusing the superhuman with a false kind of transcendence. Section 10.3 outlines Zarathustra's diagnosis of why this danger exists and how the doctrine of eternal recurrence might prevent it, thereby guaranteeing that the superhuman ideal – or any ideal that might be reasonably integrated into its orbit – will not be suspect. However, against Loeb, I suggest in Section 10.4 that the solution does not consist in the acquisition of a new skill, but rather in cultivating a love of life that allows us to affirmatively embrace our tragic destiny of always remaining transitional creatures. Finally, in Section 10.5, I argue that *Zarathustra* is a propaedeutic to the art of love of life and, thus, that it is unlikely that its pedagogical purpose can be achieved through technological interventions like those envisioned by transhumanists.

10.2 The Broken Wings of False Transcendence

From the start, *Zarathustra* warns its readers against confusing the superhuman ideal with false or sickly versions of it. The prologue's tightrope

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scene prefigures this theme, "man is a rope fastened between animal and superhuman—a rope over an abyss," Zarathustra exclaims just a few moments before the tightrope walker steps into the scene to metaphorically enact the very transition from animality to superhumanity being mentioned (*Z* P:4–6; translation modified).[3] However, his movement along the rope is abruptly interrupted midpoint by the jester who, in his rush to get to the other side, leaps over him, making him fall toward the crowd and his eventual death. The import of the episode is hard to miss: humanity needs to transition to superhumanity, but rushing or making a mockery of the whole process will result in our and the ideal's perdition.

Other chapters pick up this theme. In "On the Hinterworldly," Zarathustra himself admits to having pursued problematic projects of transcendence in the past, like those commonly championed by hinterworldly people, and suggests that suffering and impotence are the reasons behind these transcendental miscarriages. Indeed, prefiguring the theme of "On the Despisers of the Body," Zarathustra suggests that hinterworldly people are dissatisfied with their own body and would like to "jump out of their skin." In language that strongly recalls the jester's hasty attempt to reach the end of the rope in one lethal jump, he claims that it is "weariness that wants its ultimate with one great leap, with a death leap; a poor unknowing weariness that no longer even wants to will: that created all gods and hinterworlds" (*Z* I.3).

In the chapter "On the Tree on the Mountain," echoes of this leaping jester-like figure appear to hover over the noble youngster who confesses to being weary of the heights and ashamed of all his climbing, for he "often skip[s] steps when [he] climbs" (*Z* I.8). His jester-like hastiness frustrates his efforts at rising, like the tree, "high beyond humans and animals." Zarathustra suggests that it is his spirit's lack of freedom that is responsible for his failures and warns that his weariness can lead him to become – much like the prologue's jester – "a mocker, an annihilator" (*Z* I.8). This possibility seems related, again, to contempt for the body. Zarathustra reintroduces the metaphor of the broken wings used to characterize the transcendental poeticizing of hinterworldly humans in his exhortation to the youngster not to follow the path of those nobles who lost their heroic soul and became libertines. They said, "spirit is lust too" and, in doing so, "the wings of their spirit broke, and now it crawls around and soils what it gnaws" (*Z* I.8). Since contempt for the body is responsible for fracturing

[3] In this chapter, I use the translations from the Cambridge University Press editions of Nietzsche's works, indicating my alterations in parentheses.

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the wings of the hinterworldly, presumably the same is true for the libertine.

This reading can be confirmed if we reflect further on the resonances between the claim that spirit is also lust and the overall naturalist and reductionist tendency of the "awakened and knowing one" in "On the Despisers of the Body" who has expressed the conviction that "body I am through and through and nothing besides, and soul is just a word for something about the body" (*Z* I.4). For the knowing person, the conceptual categories of the soul, such as "spirit," "ego," and the like, are really epiphenomenal manifestations of the body and its instruments and tools, since, as Zarathustra puts it, "the creative body created spirit for itself as the hand of its will" (*Z* I.4). However, the initial reductionist remark of the "awakened one who knows" is actually contraposed to the child's claim that "body I am, and soul," which was followed by Zarathustra's rhetorical question: "And why should one not speak like children?" (*Z* I.4) The question invites readers to endorse the child's perspective, making it ambiguous whether Zarathustra really means to wholeheartedly sanction the beliefs of the awakened and knowing person. This suspicion is compounded by the fact that, as we know from an earlier speech, the child is the ultimate transformation of the spirit in its path to liberation and self-overcoming (*Z* I.1). Our reflections on the plight of the noble youngster throw some unexpected light on this situation (which has been the subject of some debate in the literature),[4] and confirm the idea that Zarathustra is in fact aligning himself with the child's position. For, consider that the metaphor of the broken wings mentioned in conjunction with the impulse to despise the body contrasts with the metamorphosed child-spirit and its fully-abled "butterfly wings" that is the subject of "On the Three Metamorphoses."

If Zarathustra is endorsing the child's position, then his contraposing it to the remark of the one who is "awake and knows" is presumably meant to signal that this latter character is in danger of becoming one of those despisers of the body that are the real subject matter of his speech – if he has not already become one. Indeed, some of the language in Zarathustra's speech appears to indicate that the knowing person is on the verge of despising his body. Take this way of addressing the knowing person: "Your self laughs at your ego and its proud leaps. 'What are these leaps and flights of thought to me?' It says to itself" (*Z* I.4). It is hard not to hear in this laughter *a jester-like contempt*, an impulse to *humiliate* the pride of the ego

[4] Gerhardt (2006); Riccardi (2015b); Daigle (2011).

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(also that of his "spirit" and "sense" that had been called "vain"), which – by the knowing one's own admission – is just the body itself, hence, *an impulse of the body to despise itself*. My suggestion is not that the language confirms that the awakened one despises his body, but that it shows he is already well on his way to doing so. Another point to consider is that in Zarathustra's universe being "awake" is not univocally positive. Among the reasons that Zarathustra singles out to explain the noble youngster's disgust and weariness at his own climbing is the fact that his seeking has made him "sleep-deprived and over-awake" (*Z* I.8). Later, in the soothsayer's divination, we will encounter a similar idea: "we have already become too weary to die," the soothsayer will say, "*now we continue to wake* and we live on—in burial chambers!" (*Z* II.19; emphasis added). Thus, being awake is not necessarily a blessing for the "one who knows," and Zarathustra's seeming endorsement of the child's position might be read as implying that – in order to fulfill the self's longstanding desire to "create beyond itself" – the creative body better adopt the *daydreaming* attitude of the child who, in truly transfigured fashion, turns the spirit, not so much into the hands, as into *the wings of his will* (*Z* I.4). The lesson seems to be that we can avoid turning Zarathustra's ideal of superhumanity into a destructive mockery of itself only when we learn to dream in active mode, while awake, and *spiritualize our body* by giving it wings.

10.3 Eternal Recurrence and the Will's Liberation

Let this suffice to demonstrate Nietzsche's concern with alerting the reader to the dangers of turning Zarathustra's superhuman ideal into a buffoonish caricature of itself. Given these repeated warnings, it is not surprising that critics of the modern transhumanist project have argued that transhumanists fall prey to the very dangers Zarathustra worries about and instantiate false transcendences.

Both Babich (2017) and Ansell-Pearson (1997), for instance, suggest that modern transhumanism is a form of the ascetic ideal which Nietzsche considers inimical to life insofar as it seeks to produce an "improved humanity" that is really no more than a weakened and flattened out version of ourselves (*GM* III:21). Babich, moreover, calls attention to the fact that there are oppressive, totalitarian and oligarchic tendencies animating much of the transhumanist movement (Babich 2017: 109–112). Following similar lines of reasoning, both Tuncel and Woodward, argue that, by seeking to eliminate suffering, transhumanism alienates itself from any recognizable Nietzschean project of transcendence which will

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necessarily include pain and suffering as essential components (Tuncel 2017b: 226–229; Woodward 2017: 239–240). Yet others, like Skowron, attempt to show that the transhumanist ideals of developing a happy, healthy and – if possible – immortal life, are ones that Nietzsche more readily equates with the Last Man and, certainly, not of the sort that the superhuman would instantiate (Skowron 2013: 258 –259, 270–273). Even those, like Bamford, who adopt more neutral, perhaps even favorable, positions with respect to technological enhancement, raise concerns about the values animating much of these efforts. For Nietzsche, traditional morality is likely to stupefy, not promote, the self-overcoming of humanity. Thus, Bamford suggests that transhumanists would benefit from taking more seriously Nietzsche's critique of the morality of compassion that seems to frame most of their assumptions about what type of moral enhancements ought to be pursued (Bamford 2017: 215–218).

I broadly agree with much of what these and other commentators have said concerning the relation between Nietzsche's philosophy and contemporary transhumanism. However, I also agree with some things Sorgner says in reply to critics. Sorgner correctly notes that there are no necessary connections between transhumanism and the kind of problematic positions with which these interpreters appear to want to saddle the movement (Sorgner 2017c: 141, 150–154). In fact, there is a rich debate concerning the aims and methods, as well as the general political and ethical orientation of transhumanism.[5] If there is something that unites this diversity of views, it is the idea that we should employ technology to break the limits of our humanity and significantly alter our lives. Beyond this very general statement of intent, however, participants in the movement answer the question of how to carry out their mission in accordance with the overarching narratives they respectively favor concerning what human beings should become and what type of life it is best to lead. Still, as Sorgner points out, there may be some general tendencies that are discernible. For instance, most transhumanists appear to be naturalists who reject metaphysical dualisms and uphold a strict this-worldly understanding of reality in which minds are thoroughly embodied. Sorgner often uses these perceived commonalities to defend his own version of Nietzschean transhumanism against criticisms. Accordingly, he argues that, since most transhumanists are naturalists, they cannot be in the grips of the ascetic ideal, which aims at otherworldly goals and aspires to an immaterial

[5] Ranisch and Sorgner (2014) discuss some of these issues.

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personal immortality that is simply incompatible with a naturalistic stance (Sorgner 2017c: 152, 157–158; 2017d: 251).

One could, of course, quibble with some of these claims. After all, from a Nietzschean point of view, whether or not transhumanism instantiates the ascetic ideal will depend wholly on what one understands this ideal to mean in Nietzsche's philosophy, which is a thorny question. Thus, instead of engaging in a tug of war for the right to call the transhumanist movement an ally or an enemy of Nietzschean philosophy, I believe that we would be better served by considering some of the ways in which Nietzsche's ideas could help advance the debate along more productive paths. And it is here, I think, that *Zarathustra* can prove useful for steering the discussion further in the right direction.

I began by calling attention to the manner in which Nietzsche's book alerts us to the difficulties involved in ensuring that the pursuit of the superhuman is genuine and salutary. Assuming that Zarathustra's worries are warranted, and that the transhumanist project of technological enhancement is not incompatible with the superhuman, then presumably the same difficulties he worries about would be operative in evaluating whether transhumanism constitutes an instance of false or sickly transcendence. Notice here that an appeal to perceived commonalities within the movement will simply not do. Even if naturalism is representative of transhumanism as a whole, this feature on its own will not guarantee the purity of any transcendent effort. That was Zarathustra's point in warning the youngster about being overly awake and vigilant in the manner of those knowing people who trust too much in their naturalistic beliefs about the materiality of their ego and the thoroughly embodied conceptions of their spirit. Those conceptions and beliefs can end up diverting our transcendent efforts into projects that, in reality, break the wings of our spirit and, instead of contributing to its growth beyond the human, merely turn it into a more sophisticated version of its very human-all-too-human animal self: a libertine. Libertinism, then, is actually a veiled, unconfessed *hatred of the body and the earth*, posing as if it were a celebration of those things. It attempts to pass off abandonment of the spirit to its bodily pleasures as a love of earth and the body when in fact it expresses a weary hatred of those things and their immanent, but also transcendent, possibilities.

This kind of danger should be especially salient to transhumanists who often seem moved by motives that resemble those that worry Zarathustra. Not only are some transhumanists, like Kurzweil (2005), constantly inveighing against what they perceive to be romanticized notions of death

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and our biological limits, but they seem eager to promote an enhancement that sounds just like technologically enabled libertinism. The goal is to furnish our animal self with more fanciful body-gadgets and abilities that will enable it to pursue its earthly pleasures in heretofore unimagined ways. Against such "crawling" libertinisms with broken wings masquerading as genuine transcendent projects, Nietzsche contraposes what, in *On the Genealogy of Morals*, he will call that "cheerful asceticism of an animal become fledged and divine, who rather than repose in life, floats above it" (*GM* III:8; translation modified). Such positive asceticism is *the great promise* that is contained in the image of the genuine philosopher who is capable of utilizing the most dangerous things, like all ascetic practices, not as bridges to nothingness, but rather as *bridges to independence and freedom* (*GM* II:16, III:7, 10–11). But how is this great promise to be realized if, as Nietzsche also suggests, genuine philosophers until now had to creep about in the multiple guises of that "gloomy caterpillar form" of the ascetic priest (*GM* III:10)? So that today even analytic, continental, naturalist, transcendental types of modern scientists and scholars continue – often in secret, unacknowledged ways – to incarnate the weary, overly awake, hating disposition toward life and the body that is responsible for derailing all our efforts to grow beyond the animal and the human?

Fortunately for us – and perhaps also for transhumanists – Nietzsche's *Zarathustra* is also concerned with providing a cure for these problems so as to ensure that our transcendent efforts do not flounder. Indeed, by Nietzsche's own admission, the story is constructed around the doctrine of eternal recurrence, which constitutes the basic conception of the book as a whole (*EH* Z:1). This doctrine is inextricably connected to the superhuman because it is the thought that, when confronted and affirmatively overcome, allows Zarathustra to evade the sort of weariness that could spoil his superhuman ideal in the ways described above. Loeb is therefore correct when he complains about the transhumanist strategy of cherry-picking Nietzsche's thoughts while dismissing the philosophical connections that he himself established between those thoughts, on the hermeneutically uncharitable assumption that he must have been confused about their relation (Loeb 2017a: 85 –86).[6] If transhumanists find Nietzsche's philosophy sufficiently valuable to appropriate his idea of superhumanity and claim him as ally, then perhaps they should take more seriously Nietzsche's suggestion that eternal recurrence is an essential component of his philosophical project. Doing so should lead them to conclude, as

[6] See Skowron (2013: 269–270).

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Loeb suggests, "that eternal recurrence is actually *required* for there to be any transhumanist progress in the first place" (Loeb 2017a: 91). My reasons for agreeing with Loeb's observation, however, are importantly different from the ones he gives. To appreciate this difference, let me describe in a little more detail the place that eternal recurrence occupies in Zarathustra's story.

Part II begins by warning its readers – yet again – about the dangers confronting Zarathustra's teaching of the superhuman, which his enemies threaten to distort (*Z* II.1). Thus, in the following speech, "On the Blessed Isles," Zarathustra tries to articulate again what he takes to be the importance of his teaching. Among the things we can surmise from his speech is that the superhuman is a conjecture that represents the highest fruit and version of the creative will. Since Zarathustra suggests in this chapter that his teachings are like ripe figs that fall from the tree to his friends and brothers, this is one of the ways in which Nietzsche connects Zarathustra's teaching of superhumanity both to his early philosophy and to the works that came after *Zarathustra*. In the *Untimely Meditations*, Nietzsche had suggested that the way to justify life was to pursue the cultural project of procreating the genius, "the highest fruit of life" (*UM* III:3). By the time we reach the *Genealogy*, the free personality that is the genius has metamorphosed into that of the sovereign individual who is a master of a free will and the *ripest fruit* that is promised as the final product of the cultural labor of humankind on itself. This is a fruit and a promise that is described as the paradoxical task that nature appears to have set itself in the case of the human animal, but that seems, as of yet, unfulfilled (see *GM* II:1–2). Zarathustra's attempt to redirect humankind toward the superhuman can be read as an attempt to truly fulfill the task and to finally realize the great promise of freedom that is contained, still in chrysalis form, in the creative will of the human being.[7] That creative will, after all, as Zarathustra insists, is a liberator and joy-bringer that can redeem us from the suffering that is required to chisel out of the stone of humankind the still sleeping beautiful image of the superhuman child with butterfly wings (*Z* II.2).

As the events of Part Two unfold, however, we discover that the creative will cannot really fulfill its destiny of being a liberator and redeemer. This is because the creative will is itself a prisoner of the past which it regards as an *unmovable stone* against which it gnashes its teeth in impotent melancholy (*Z* II.20). In prior work I have argued that the chapter

[7] Acampora (2006) and Loeb (2006) argue against identifying the sovereign individual with Nietzsche's/Zarathustra's ideal. In Zamosc (2012), I defend the view that it is Nietzsche's ideal.

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"On Redemption" where this theme is developed outlines two basic forms of the will's impotence: a *retrospective* and a *prospective* kind of impotence (Zamosc 2015b). The former usually manifests itself in the experience of so-called negative affective responses like guilt and shame. The recollection of past deeds that turned out badly, especially those in the execution of which we failed to live up to some moral expectation we had of ourselves, can be the source of great anguish that lingers on in the present and even threatens to spill over and blot our future. This is why Zarathustra claims that the most secret melancholy of the will is that it cannot break time or will backwards (*Z* II.20). A reverse causation, or a "backward-willing," seems like the perfect solution since it would allow us to alter the past and make it more agreeable to our conscience by literally erasing or modifying our causal role in bringing about the events that now torment us. The second form of impotence mentioned consists in a prospective powerlessness that manifests itself in our incapacity to stop the rapacious passage of time and to prevent the present and the future from becoming the past. Thus, the melancholic misery we experience with this second kind of impotence will express itself in things like longing and nostalgia for our bygone days; as well as in the anxious anticipation of aging, in which we expect to be subjected to the unrelentless process of going kerflooey; to say nothing of our fear at the prospect of that ultimate demise which will be our death. Here, again, a kind of backward-willing might seem like a perfect remedy insofar as it might rewind the clock, so to speak, and reverse or stop the greedy advancement of time which appears to be robbing us of precious moments with every turn of the dial.

Since the perfect solution to both forms of impotence seems to lie outside its jurisdiction, given that it seems impossible to move the stone that is the past and change it by willing backwards, Zarathustra suggests that the will is forced to devise a different remedy for its misery which quickly turns into anger. This remedy consists in venting its incapacity to change the past into punitive acts of vengeance against everything that is capable of suffering, including itself, in the hope that this might expiate the leaden feeling produced by the past and finally alleviate it. Zarathustra calls this solution a futile and insane "madness," because "no deed can be annihilated; how could it be undone through punishment?" (*Z* II.20)[8]

[8] Loeb thinks "madness" does not reveal what the will's powerlessness consists in (Loeb 2010: 178–179 n. 9). But, since the will is susceptible to this "madness," presumably the solutions it offers indicate what is on the will's mind. On my reading: principally, guilt or regret for past events that it cannot alter. See *WS* 323.

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Indeed, realizing that the past cannot be undone by producing harm should lead us to conclude that our melancholic ill will toward the past will never really stop weighing on us, save at that moment when we ourselves cease to be, at which point the solution would come too late and be most unwelcome. It is perhaps for this reason that Zarathustra claims that the will's vindictive attitude against the past ultimately crystalizes in a "fable of madness" that recommends, as a final solution, the attempt to transform the creative will into a "not-willing," on the assumption that willing itself is inherently evil and the source of all misery (*Z* II.20). This insane, nihilistic, will-denying solution is an expression of what we may call the "sinful conscience" that lies at the center of the ascetic ideal and of all ascetic religions, like Christianity and Buddhism, and that is also championed in Schopenhauer's pessimistic philosophy.

This nihilistic attitude had been introduced just moments before by the soothsayer who predicted that the earth was destined to become an infertile land populated by walking-dead humans who tout the fatalistic doctrine: "everything is empty, everything is the same, everything was" (*Z* II:19). Thus, what stands in the way of Zarathustra's teaching of the superhuman is the very real threat that the future of humankind will get irretrievably lodged in the direction of these nihilistic attitudes and doctrines of will-denial that have their origin in the creative will's powerlessness with respect to the past. Eternal recurrence, then, is the thought that will allow Zarathustra to avoid this outcome and dislodge the will from its current trajectory toward the sinful, nihilistic denial of itself.[9] Importantly – given his concluding remarks – if eternal recurrence allows Zarathustra to redeem his creative will from its impotence with respect to the past, it must do so by teaching it not just reconciliation with time but *something higher than all reconciliation*, which – Zarathustra implies – would be equivalent to teaching the will to will backwards (*Z* II:20).

10.4 Love's Backward-Willing

For Loeb, this something higher than all reconciliation is a new skill he calls prospective memory: the ability to actually will backwards by influencing the past from the vantage point of the present and the future (Loeb 2010: 173–206; 2017a: 92–93). This ability requires the knowledge

[9] In his convalescent speech, Zarathustra relates eternal recurrence to the soothsayer's saying (*Z* III.13:2); and in his next speech he suggests that he liberated his soul by *strangling the strangler called sin* (ZIII.14).

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and truth of a cosmological recurrence in which every event will repeat itself in exactly the same order for all eternity. But – importantly – it does not give Zarathustra the capacity to alter the past, since, by his own admission, the past is unchangeable (Loeb 2010: 178–179, 188–189). Still, Loeb insists that prospective memory constitutes a real power over time because it allows the will to *influence* the past's determination of the present and impose its creative design on an open-ended future, thereby overcoming the soothsayer's prophecy that everything will always be the same (2017a: 91; 2010: 155). As I understand it, the idea is that, from its present moment, the will can implant memories into its past younger versions and these memories will enable it to see itself as actually helping to produce those life-moments that it was indeed causally implicated in producing, particularly those moments that it wants eternally returned to it. On Loeb's reading, this new recognition, which is retroactively enabled from the present through subconscious mechanisms, lessens the creative will's feeling of impotence toward the past because it allows it to recognize what was done as done in that way and not otherwise precisely *because of* its present creative willing (Loeb 2010: 179). Thus, Loeb suggests, backward-willing allows Zarathustra to become the artist creator of his own life by enabling him to *intentionally unify* the fragmented, accidental aspects of his past, making them necessary to his perfected future self (Loeb 2010: 189).

This is the aspect that is most difficult to understand about Loeb's insightful and highly thought-provoking reading, and – admittedly – I am not sure that I fully grasp how the past is supposed to be *influenced* by the present self's new mnemonic power, where that influence is not to be understood in what I take to be the usual, straightforward sense of a causal power to alter events (in this case, to alter the events of the past). Regardless, given that Loeb admits that such a retrospective influence cannot change the past, it seems to me that the solution it affords to the will's predicament – as outlined in Section 10.3 – will not be fully satisfactory and might even make matters worse. In particular, this kind of backward-willing does not help the creative will to cope with its *retrospective powerlessness*. For, pace Loeb, the problem of retrospective powerlessness is not that the will cannot regard itself "as having now had any creative effect or influence on [its] past" (Loeb 2010: 179). Instead, the problem is that the will cannot really erase the causal contribution that it actually made to the past and that now has come back to torment it. This is the more natural way to read Zarathustra's suggestion that the will is "impotent against that which has been" and "is an evil spectator of everything

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past" (*Z* II.20; translation modified). What the will cannot do is stop seeing itself as evil contributor of what it has actually done.[10] Precisely its very real influence, back then, on the past having come to be what it already has become, is what the will feels bad about and would like to change. But what is already done cannot be undone. Notice that in the context of this problem, learning that the will has the ability to somehow influence its past actions from its present or future self by inserting subconscious messages into its past self's mind through its newly discovered mnemonic power, will simply add insult to injury. Our dissatisfaction with our past actions would become more tormenting if we became aware of our ability to send ourselves messages into that past in order to issue proper warnings and advice to our older selves. After all, whatever advice that ability may be able to encode into the past is – by hypothesis – *causally ineffective* in altering the regrettable outcome that now torments us. Our ability to perceive the presence of this causally ineffectual advice would only serve to twist the knife that is already stabbing us.[11]

Despite my problem with Loeb's interpretation of what backward-willing entails, I think that he is correct in arguing that it cannot involve altering the past, as some commentators assume.[12] He is also right in registering dissatisfaction with interpretations, such as the one offered by Nehamas (1985: 160), that see backward-willing as a kind of metaphorical or psychological operation whereby one retrospectively *redescribes* one's past in an affirming manner, thereby "changing" it so that it becomes new

[10] For Nietzsche, evil is associated with the production of harm (*GM* I:10–11). This indicates that the will's recollection of the past is hurtful, which normally signals that guilt or regret is involved. This explains why "sinfulness" (the real target of Nietzsche's critique; Zamosc 2012) will quickly become the main issue.

[11] Loeb would say that Zarathustra's present power to influence the past ensures that he does not feel guilty about his past or want to change it because he has perfected his life by introducing unity and meaning into it, so there is no knife that is stabbing him. But if – in the moment he is encountering eternal recurrence – Zarathustra does not experience retrospective powerlessness in the form of guilt, then he is not really mirroring the will's problem with the past, and his overcoming of eternal recurrence will not help the human will deal with its guilt and overcome its impotence. If, on the other hand, Zarathustra experiences guilt when he encounters eternal recurrence, then the question is how backward-willing unity into his life without altering or changing the cause of the guilt he is feeling (i.e., the actual past he now regrets), would nonetheless allow him to get rid of that guilt (i.e., to now stop feeling it). One advantage of the solution I will offer in this section consists in recognizing that guilt is not eradicated at all, precisely because the past that causes this guilt is not being altered. Instead, the guilt is overcome or surpassed by love, which allows the will to continue feeling guilty but, at the same time, to move forward from its guilt in an affirmative manner (i.e., to not transform guilt into sin).

[12] For example Gooding-Williams (2001: 219–268); Pippin (1988: 55); Lampert (1986: 148).

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and different from what it was (Loeb 2010: 187 –188).[13] As Loeb notes, Zarathustra denies that the past can be changed *in any way*. Thus, we need to understand backward-willing in a manner that does not entail any actual alteration of the past whether metaphorically or literally. In my view, *love* is the way out of this predicament.

The kind of volitional engagement that is involved in love could help us understand how to relate to something, like the past, in new intentionally rich ways without needing to change it. Love involves a conative form of valuation for the beloved that can motivate us to do all sorts of things, but that need not motivate us to do anything in particular. We can care for the thing we love, or we can actively seek to promote its interests, but we can also just be in awe of it without doing anything other than valuing it for what it is. Importantly, the objects of our love can be things we do not have to endorse blankly or wholeheartedly. You can deeply love members of your family that you cannot stand to be in the same room with, because of their political views, or their religious values, or what have you. Nietzsche himself, who had to personally contend with this sort of thing, since he had a sister and a mother that he could not stand, writes in *The Gay Science* that one should not assume that people who had to experience severe pain and illness in their lives are necessarily incapable of being well-disposed toward life for, "love of life is still possible – only one loves differently. It is like the love for a woman who gives us doubts" (*GS* P:3). This is a sentiment that is made even more poignant in Zarathustra's confession that "[a]t bottom I love only life – and verily, most when I hate it!" (*Z* II.10).[14]

Trying to make sense of these phenomenological aspects of love, Velleman argues that what is essential to love is that "it disarms our emotional defenses toward an object in response to its incomparable value as a self-existent end" (Velleman 2006: 99). It strikes me that this definition captures something important that might help us understand why love could serve as model for the kind of backward-willing that Zarathustra claims to have learned through his experience of eternal recurrence. If the past were to become the object of our love, then what we would love would be a self-existent end, one that is not to be brought about or produced by our willing (since it already is). Thus, when we love the past, we do not really seek to change it. Yet, in being as it is and being

[13] See for example Higgins (1987: 187–188); Clark (1990: 255–260); White (1997: 114–115); Strong (2000: 235–237); Richardson (2006: 224–225).

[14] See *Z* III.14; *Z* I.18; *BGE* 216.

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unchangeable, the past – by commanding our loving attention – makes us vulnerable, in the sense of lowering our emotional defenses with respect to it so that we can be affected by it in new ways that can unleash in us different motivational responses. A loving disposition toward the past is a willing, and a willingness, to allow oneself to be emotionally touched and motivationally aroused by whatever commands our loving affection for the past.

Let me now integrate these considerations into the problem of liberating the creative will from its impotent and hateful regard for the past. My claim is that the thing that is higher than all reconciliation with time, and that Zarathustra learns through his encounter with eternal recurrence, is love for the past. The creative will needs to liberate itself from its hatred of the past that threatens to break its wings and that weighs it down, making it crawl around, soiling what it gnaws with gnashing teeth of impotence. Indeed, this hatred has become a spirit of revenge (and a spirit of gravity) that now prevents the will from moving forward, anchoring it – in impotent regard – to the past, and tempting it to transform itself into a not-willing-anymore. Transmuting this hatred into love allows the creative will to relate itself to the past (hence, to will backwards) with different eyes, releasing it from its anchor of hatred, and enabling it to fly off into the future with newly restored wings. In my view, love of the past is a kind of backward-willing with a forward intent. The thing in the past that lowers our emotional defenses which had been raised by our hatred is the thing that then propels us forward, or at the very least, that we carry forward as we get on with our lives. This "carrying forward" will continue to have the past in sight, or at least *that in it which commands our love*. What is interesting about this emotional alchemy of transmuting hatred into love is that developing a loving disposition to the past need not imply that one stops hating it. What it does imply is that one's hatred has been overcome by one's love, which now extends itself over the past in a sufficiently ample emotional tent to be able to encompass and surpass one's hatred through a surfeit of positive emotion. The reason this is possible is that what commands one's love of the past – propelling one forward into the future – need not be the same thing that makes one hate the past.

I have not said what about the past commands our love, nor have I explained how eternal recurrence could be implicated in our falling in love with it. I cannot fully delve into this question here, but let me conclude this section by registering where I think the answer lies. In my preliminary approximation to the very thorny problem of eternal recurrence, I argued that it can be understood as a parable about the (pro)

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creative will itself, the will to power, which is the fundamental engine of all life that is constantly resurrected and returns to its self-same life in all its transitory transformations through the stream of time and becoming (Zamosc 2015b).[15] Among the things that confrontation with this thought teaches Zarathustra is that the human being will never cease to be a mere transit or *bridge*, destined to find itself still human-all-too-human in all its attempts at growing "high beyond humans and animals" (*Z* I.8; *Z* III.12:2). But while this thought might initially make us weary and afraid that all our creative efforts are in vain, it can also – when properly incorporated into our lives – teach us to love our transitional destiny of forever remaining mere bridges to the superhuman. If it does, what we would have learned to love through this process is the creative will to power itself, of which we are self-conscious surrogates while we remain in existence. Thus, on my reading, love of the past is really love of what in the past was creative will to power, which will recur eternally in the stream of time.

Since the will to power is just the engine of all life, love of the past is also equivalent to love of life. This is a love of that aspect in the past that is not gone, because it is essential and unburiable – because, as Nietzsche puts it, referring to his own past in *Ecce Homo*, "whatever was life in it has been saved, is immortal" (*EH* "Epigraph"; translation modified). This love liberates the creative will from its powerlessness with respect to the past, affording it the freedom to fulfill its redemptive function, which Zarathustra at one point describes thus: "All 'it was' is a fragment, a riddle, a grisly accident—until the creating will says to it: 'But thus I willed it'. Until the creative will says to it: 'But thus I will it! Thus shall I will it!'" (*Z* II.20; translation modified) What I interpret the will to will here, in these three temporal modes of past, present, and future, is *itself: its creative activity of being a (pro)creative will*. Of course, in willing its creative activity and self across and through time, the will is subject to the accidental nature of becoming which can manifest itself in the fact that the particulars of the will's creative activity may be something that it could come to regret. We do not have absolute control of our creative willing, and this means that we might feel dissatisfied by its results. By reflecting on what is eternal in its

[15] My solution to the problem of backwards-willing does not depend on the truth of cosmological recurrence because love of life is achieved by thinking about what is true in the parable, namely, that what literally recurs eternally as the same are the operations of the will to power itself, not its particular expressions which are finite and, perhaps, unrepeatable. Still, my interpretation can incorporate desire for this latter kind of cosmological recurrence as *confirmation* that one has indeed already achieved a love of life (*GS* 341).

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own nature (by thinking through the thought of eternal recurrence) the creative will can learn to achieve reconciliation with its shortcomings, to let go of the past. But it can also achieve something higher than all "letting go," namely *love*, which allows it to overcome its past shortcomings by carrying forward that which is still lovable in them: itself.

Love of the past or love of life is, therefore, a form of self-love.[16] But, importantly, it is not a narrowly egoistic one. What one loves, after all, is that aspect of oneself that is also in everything else that is, or was, or will be in existence. Moreover, because human beings are self-conscious surrogates of the creative will to power, in our particular case our self-love involves the recognition of this self-conscious surrogacy, this *humanity*, in each other. Through this love, then, we learn that we are not alone.[17] In my view, this is why Zarathustra uses the metaphor of the "rainbow bridge" in his convalescent speech when referring to eternal recurrence and the love of life it enables. This theme had been prefigured by some of Zarathustra's earlier remarks. In the Prologue he had said, "I shall join the creators, the harvesters the celebrators: I shall show them the rainbow and all the steps to the superhuman" (*Z* P:9; translation modified). And in an important moment in Part Two we had read: "For *that mankind be redeemed from revenge*: that to me is the bridge to the highest hope and a rainbow after long thunderstorms" (*Z* II.7). Now convalescing, after confronting eternal recurrence, Zarathustra tells his animals that each human being is a world in itself and that we all seem eternally separated from each other despite the fact that, in reality, we are also most similar to each other. The gap that separates us, then, is really tiny and yet the most difficult to bridge. We can, nonetheless, bridge this gap with the help of Zarathustra's poetic words that seek to communicate his newly learned love of life. Hence his claim that "with sounds, our love dances on colorful rainbows" (*Z* III.13:2). The love of life that we learn through eternal recurrence is an ecumenical love that connects us to each other, through its rainbow bridges, by means of the mutual recognition that it commands within us of that aspect which is the same in all of us: the creative will itself and its ability to self-overcome. By connecting us to each other, this love enables us to pursue the ideal of the superhuman: the ennoblement and elevation of that aspect of ourselves that is unburiable, even if we ourselves are

[16] It heeds, thereby, Zarathustra's teaching that "whoever wants to become light and a bird must love himself." This is a lesson that, significantly – given the issue of moving the *unmovable stone* that is the past – follows the claim that "whoever one day teaches humans to fly, will have shifted all boundary stones" (*Z* III.11:2).

[17] This love enables, then, Zarathustra's neighborly love which consists in loving your neighbor as you love yourself (*Z* III.5:3).

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not. We will perish, but our love will live on in others who, inspired and invigorated by our efforts, can keep on pushing, keep on climbing, high above the human and the animal.[18]

10.5 Conclusion: Humanity's Murmuration

The association of rainbow bridges to eternal recurrence is accompanied by the idea that a kind of artistic engineering is required to build these ties of humanly and superhumanly love. Zarathustra's poetic words concerning eternal recurrence, and the sounds of love with which he hopes to teach us how to dance on the tightrope that hangs over the abyss of our deep woe, are *illusory* and *lying* words (*Z* III.13:2).[19] With these artistic instruments, a kind of performative experience is built into the book, so that – as commentators have noted – Zarathustra himself enacts the experience of thinking through and incorporating eternal recurrence. I will follow those who suggest that these various stylistic and artistic tropes have some kind of didactic function.[20] Nietzsche intended *Zarathustra* as a propaedeutic to the art of loving life. The artistic elements are there to make Zarathustra's teachings, particularly that of eternal recurrence, the object of an active willing on the part of the reader rather than a mere passive exercise of detached intellectual spectatorship. Accordingly – and against Stegmaier's (2013) suggestion that they are meant to liberate the teacher – the poetic, sometimes apparently contradictory, aspects of the book liberate *the learners* by challenging them to appropriate the book's lessons with their body *and soul*.[21] Nietzsche considered *Zarathustra* his most important book because he wanted to gift humankind with the type of artistic experience that, in his youth, he had argued Greek tragedy afforded its audiences: a transfiguring experience that, once incorporated, injects you back into the world with a renewed sense of purpose. This is the purpose of augmenting nature by attempting to live an ennobled existence that can embellish not just your own egoistic life, but humankind itself. The

[18] Nietzsche praises solitude and is critical of herd mentality, but his goal always includes building a higher, nobler community (*Z* I.22:2; Cf. *UM* III:5, *UM* IV:4). While love of humanity facilitates that project, it should not be confused with impotent Christian love of humanity (*BGE* 104; *Z* I.16; *GM* I:8, 14–15). The Nietzschean love of humanity is *for the sake of the superhuman*, which is the "higher tendency" that gives this love the "subtlety and ambergris" that will allow us to fly higher than any person has ever flown (*BGE* 60).

[19] Although this touches on the thorny issue of falsification, I will bracket the problem and focus instead on how the artistic elements mentioned advance *Zarathustra*'s pedagogical function. Hatab (2018) tries to articulate a positive notion of falsification in *Zarathustra*.

[20] See also Stegmaier (2013); Skowron (2004).

[21] See also Zamosc (2015a: 265–266 n. 42).

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thought of eternal recurrence figures prominently in this pedagogical exercise and organizes the book as a whole.

Thus, on my view, eternal recurrence is required for there to be any transhumanist progress, not because this doctrine teaches us the type of control over time that would be needed to take charge of our own evolutionary process – as Loeb believes (Loeb 2017a: 95–96) – but, rather because it teaches us the kind of love for our humanity that will enable us to pursue its highest hope: the ideal of the superhuman. To learn this sort of love is to make ourselves vulnerable to the fact that we cannot have absolute control over the contingencies of nature. It is to reconcile ourselves to the notion that our efforts at self-overcoming might fall prey to the vicissitudes of time and becoming in such a way that we might come to regret them.[22] But through our love we can achieve something higher than all reconciliation by learning to move on and carry forward the commanding affection we have for the free creative will that we incarnate and that is the same in all of us. This love teaches us to take joy and comfort in human freedom itself and its effects, even its tragic ones. While our love does not eradicate our hatred for the past, it provides a force field that keeps the gnawing worm of guilt, sin and resentment from spoiling the fruit of our volitional faculties, so that, like the convalescent Zarathustra after his encounter with eternal recurrence, we too can enjoy the pleasant smell of the rosy apple of our creative freedom (*Z* III.13:2, 14).

Learning this kind of love seems especially urgent for a movement such as transhumanism, which often seems on the brink of being consumed by its darker side. Some of the most visible voices within transhumanism are libertarian ideologues that subscribe to an exacerbated egocentric ethics, in which anything that stands in the way of their narrow vision of personal aggrandizement through technologically enabled godlike capabilities ought to be destroyed. Against this kind of unfettered individualism and its myopic negative freedoms, Zarathustra teaches the love that does not free us from intervention by others, but actually opens us up to each other's hearts, connecting us through our mutual recognition of what is eternal, universal, and the same in all of us: the self-conscious, intentional, creative will to power itself. This uniting and unifying love does not just make us hostage to fortune, but liberates us from it, by allowing us to recognize that we are not alone. It is the kind of love with which we can grow the spiritual wings needed to dance in that dance floor for the divine dice throws of time and becoming that Zarathustra calls the sky-chance, and also the sky-innocence, the sky-mischief (*Z* III.4).

[22] This love promotes the ethical program of thinking mortal thoughts that Nussbaum recommends as a corrective against godlike transhumanism (Nussbaum 1990: 389).

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And here I detect an important disanalogy between the educational experience that *Zarathustra* affords, and technological interventions like those envisioned by transhumanists. Genuine pedagogical interventions of the kind that *Zarathustra* aspires to be are liberatory in the sense that they require the active participation of the learners. These learners must freely incorporate the lessons that are imparted to them through their own efforts, thereby intensifying the very freedom that is being summoned to accomplish this learning. The same need not be true of all technological interventions. Taking a pill can, of course, sometimes enhance our freedom, when it helps remove psychological or physiological barriers. But it can also rob us of our sense of freedom by making us feel that we have surrendered it to an external force. To me this danger looms somewhat more menacingly in the case of love.[23] Realizing that our love is not really sustained by our own efforts but is instead the product of a pill, or some other technological device, might raise the suspicion that our love is not genuine but artificially produced. There is thus an advantage in pursuing the pedagogical program Nietzsche intended in writing *Zarathustra*. By incorporating the book's lessons we can truly enhance our sense of freedom instead of diminishing it. We can also learn to love life in a way that can more reliably rescue us from the spirit of revenge that threatens to consume us, even if we are unaware of it. For, at the same time that this love makes us vulnerable to time and to each other, it also connects us and gives us the strength needed to continue climbing in the direction of the superhuman with the knowledge that, despite our limitations, our efforts will live on in the loving regard of those who will succeed us.

Murmuration is that well-known phenomenon by means of which a flock of birds is able to fly through the sky in swooping, intricate, ever-changing, and harmonious patterns. Nietzsche's hope in writing *Zarathustra* was to create an artistic work of joyful science and philosophy that could free us to pursue the superhuman ideal that gives a new meaning and direction to the earth by teaching us the commanding love that will coordinate the murmuration of our hearts.[24]

[23] Nyholm (2015) usefully discusses some of the ways in which enhancement-sustained love attachments can be less desirable than the intrinsic good of love.

[24] I am very grateful to the editors, Keith Ansell-Pearson and Paul S. Loeb, for their feedback and editorial advice. I am especially thankful to Paul S. Loeb for his incisive criticisms, the majority of which, regrettably, I could not address here. Many thanks are also due to my colleagues, Boram Jeong, Jeffrey Golub, and Mark Tanzer for helpful comments on an earlier draft. Ideas for this paper were first presented at the 25th International Conference of the Friedrich Nietzsche Society in Tilburg, Netherlands. I thank the attendants for their observations and questions.

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CHAPTER 11

Nietzsche on the Re-naturalization of Humanity in Thus Spoke Zarathustra

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In this chapter, I contend that Nietzsche's robust critiques of human exceptionalism and the "humanization of nature [*Vermenschlichung der Natur*]," as well as his positive, proto-ecocentric vision of the "naturalization of humanity [*Vernatürlichung des Menschen*]," afford contemporary environmental philosophy a novel perspective from which to critique anthropocentric conservation ideologies (according to which nature conservation ought to be motivated by the interests and aims of humanity, especially economic development and prosperity).[1] Importantly, I also argue that *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* is the work in which Nietzsche's positive vision appears most conspicuously, as suggested by Zarathustra's relationship to the natural world and his exhortations to "remain faithful to the earth."

As Nietzsche's critique of anthropocentrism reinforces his positive project, I will begin by detailing Nietzsche's rejection of human exceptionalism (Section 11.1). In addition, I will analyze Nietzsche's critique of the "humanization of nature" (*KSA* 10:10[43]; 10:13[20]; 12:1[29]), emphasizing specific pernicious projections of human values onto the other-than-human world. Although these themes appear throughout Nietzsche's body of work, they are central to *Zarathustra*.

After describing Nietzsche's critical project, I present his positive, proto-ecocentric vision for humanity's re-naturalization, one he most emphatically endorses and fleshes out in *Zarathustra* (Section 11.2). This positive vision can be found in his calls for the human being to become more natural and to cultivate a noble reverence and gratitude for the natural world so that we may learn from it about ourselves – rather than falsifying

[1] Although Nietzsche refers only to the "naturalization of humanity," I frame this naturalization as a *re*-naturalization, keeping in mind his claim that we must "translate the human being back into nature" (*BGE* 230). The following translations are used in this chapter: *A* (2005); *BT* (1999); *D* (1997); *EH* (2005); *GM* (2007); *GS* (1974); *HH* (1996); *TI* (2005); *TL* (1999); *UM* (1997); *Z* (2006).

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it for our ends and then insisting that we are part of this other, falsified nature. Only then, when we can see ourselves as natural beings – specifically, as living beings willing power, embedded in a world with other living beings who do the same – can we identify tasks and pursue aims that empower and strengthen us. In Nietzsche's view, this recognition results only from an attunement to the other-than-human world. Finally, after adding a few important caveats to proto-ecocentric strains in Nietzsche's thought, I briefly explain the contributions his thought might make to contemporary environmental philosophy and policy (Section 11.3).

11.1 Nietzsche's Critical Project

11.1.1 *Against Human Exceptionalism*

Nietzsche is consistently and explicitly critical of human exceptionalism, the view that human beings have a special status among other living beings and that their extraordinary value derives from certain distinctly human capacities, including higher-order cognitive capacities (such as rational reflection, logical thought, self-consciousness, memory, and morality).[2] As we will see in this section, Nietzsche is often explicitly critical of such a view. Additionally, however, his skepticism about these characteristically human capacities also functions as an implicit critique of human exceptionalism, informing his more explicit critique.

Explicit critiques of human exceptionalism appear throughout Nietzsche's work. In *GS*, he notes that "[humans] place themselves in a false rank order in relation to animals and nature," identifying this as one of the defining errors of humanity (*GS* 115). In unpublished notes, he both claims that "humans do not represent progress over the animal" (*KSA* 12:5[71]) and makes a point of referring to humanity only as "the richest and most complex form [of life]" and "no longer the . . . 'higher type'" (*KSA* 13:15[118]). Nietzsche echoes these sentiments in *The Antichrist*, where he remarks that "[h]umanity does *not* represent a development for the better, does not represent something stronger or higher the

[2] See Ferré (1994: 65) and Thompson (2017). The term "human exceptionalism" comes from contemporary environmental ethical literature (and does not preclude human distinctiveness). Note, however, that proponents of human exceptionalism typically make a further prescriptive claim: that it is in virtue of these unique human capacities that human beings warrant special moral consideration (in a way that other-than-human beings do not). For the purposes of this chapter, I do not include this further claim in my definition of human exceptionalism (as the phenomenon of which Nietzsche is critical).

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way people these days think it does" (*A* 4). Nietzsche explicitly speaks against this tendency to understand human beings as "the goal of animal evolution"; his aim, instead, is to "[stick] human beings back among the animals" (*A* 14). There, after first claiming that all beings, including humans, "occupy the same level of perfection," he then insists more severely that "comparatively speaking, human beings are the biggest failures, the sickliest animals who have strayed the most dangerously far from their instincts" (*A* 14).

Nietzsche's diagnosis here continues a theme that appears earlier in *The Antichrist*: human beings are corrupt; they are living beings alienated from their own will to power, which is the defining feature of all living things (*Z* II.12; *BGE* 13; *GS* 349; *GM* II:12). Our tendency to "[*prefer*] things that will harm [us]" (*A* 6) in the form of nihilistic, life-denying concepts and values turns us against our health and flourishing.[3] In other species it is a sign of grave sickness to prefer things that harm them or act in ways that hinder their power, but this morbid disposition has become characteristic of the human species, given our habits of believing and valuing. For this reason, humanity in general represents animal regression rather than progress over the animal. To become stronger and healthier, then – and before a higher type beyond humanity can emerge – humans must re-learn how to be animals.[4] At the level of our bodies, we must re-learn how to will power in ways that promote our health – that is, in part, how to orient our desires, thoughts, and actions around the healthy pursuit of power – whatever this might look like in each case.[5] In short, human beings need to learn what comes naturally to other-than-human forms of life so that their distinctly human drive to create meaning and value can manifest itself in healthy and life-affirming ways.

Another, more subtle, aspect of Nietzsche's critique of human exceptionalism is the way in which he questions the value of certain distinctively human faculties, including intellect (*Intellekt*), reason (*Vernunft*),

[3] To say that will to power is the defining feature of all living things is to say that living things are end-directed beings: they constantly engage in purposeful striving toward certain aims (where the "purpose" involved is to engage in certain actions or activities [Katsafanas 2011: 168]). Though living beings often have different aims depending on their form of life (in virtue of the drives of which they are composed), their pursuit of these aims expresses a more basic or fundamental striving: a striving after power as growth and development in their own form of life (*A* 6). In order to flourish on Nietzsche's view, living beings must will power successfully. I discuss this biological interpretation of the will to power again in Section 11.2.1.

[4] See Loeb and Tinsley (2019) for an account of Nietzsche's *Übermensch* as a re-naturalized, superhuman species.

[5] Nietzsche believes that human beings will also have to learn to *judge* their actions by the standard of power: that is, whether they enhance or hinder power.

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consciousness (*Bewusstsein*), language, memory, and morality. His skepticism (and, at times, outright hostility) toward these all-too-human capacities functions as an especially provocative critique of human exceptionalism. It is clear that Nietzsche intends it as such (*HH* 107; *EH* HH:1): after all, it is in virtue of these capacities that many modern thinkers believe humans to be the "crown of creation" (*A* 14). Since Nietzsche's critical appraisal of these capacities has been covered extensively in the literature, I only sketch them below, emphasizing how they indicate an implicit critique of human exceptionalism.

Throughout his body of work, Nietzsche questions the value of our higher-order cognitive faculties and their results, thereby unsettling the human exceptionalism that many moderns took for granted. At times, he appraises these faculties in general terms, critically evaluating thought (*Denken*), cognition (*Erkennen*), and intellect, as well as the products of these capacities: knowledge (*Wissen*) and understanding (*Erkenntnis*). In his early work, Nietzsche claims that our intellectual faculties not only falsify as much of the world as they reveal (*HH* 16); they also lead us to believe and act in ways that harm our form of life by hindering our flourishing (*HH* 16). This theme continues in *Z*, where Nietzsche rebukes the glorification of pure, disinterested understanding as well as the state of "contemplation [Beschaulichkeit]" (*Z* II.15) one must inhabit in an attempt to acquire it. After all, to inhabit such a state would involve "viewing [the world] with a dead will" and "desir[ing] nothing from things, except that [one] may lie there before them like a mirror with a hundred eyes" (*Z* II.15). According to Nietzsche, it is impossible to inhabit a "contemplative" state of this kind: the knowing human subject (or better, "subject-unity") is an embodied complex of drives and affects; all knowing is embodied, gleaned from a diversity of (embodied) perspectives and affect-interpretations (*GM* III:12) shaped by one's will to power. Perhaps more significantly, however, the pursuit of such a state slanders existence, stifles the will to power, and prevents us from being strong enough to "create over and beyond" ourselves.

Elsewhere, Nietzsche questions the value of certain distinctively human capacities, but his targets are more specific: one by one, he questions the alleged merits of reason and rationality (*Vernünftigkeit*), consciousness, language, memory, and morality. In the first book of *Zarathustra*, Nietzsche deliberately diminishes reason, deeming it "your small reason [*deine kleine Vernunft*]" and demoting it to the status of a mere "tool of [the] body . . . a small tool and plaything of your great [embodied] reason"

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(*Z* I.4). Later, he reproaches the inventions of reason ("conceptual cobweb-spinning") and designates pure rationality as "impossible" (*Z* III.4).[6] According to Nietzsche, human beings do not have special access to some objective form of truth in virtue of their rationality; they come to "know" in the same way other living beings do. Additionally, by assuming that reason is truth-disclosing, we fail to attend to the ways in which it can compel us into error (*TI* "Reason" 2). As Nietzsche argues in *GS*, attempting to grasp the world solely via "our four-cornered little human reason [. . .] demote[s] existence" by stripping it of its ambiguity (*GS* 373). To think the world can be reduced to something rationally intelligible is not only mistaken but in poor taste, as it betrays a lack of reverence for things not yet understood, for those aspects of our world that exceed our intellectual understanding and that defy rational categorization (*GS* 373).

In *GS* 373, as in *Z* I.4, Nietzsche purposefully depreciates reason *qua* human reason; instead of an extraordinary human accomplishment, reason – "rationality at any cost, a cold, bright, cautious conscious life without instinct, opposed to instinct" – is a "sickness" (*TI* "Socrates" 11). Though we have come to view reason as "divine" (*TI* "Reason" 5), a crowning achievement of humanity, Nietzsche wants to reverse this human exceptionalist evaluation. His critical assessment of consciousness calls for a similar reversal. In a note from 1888, Nietzsche decries our "senseless overestimation of consciousness" that frames consciousness as "the highest attainable form" (*KSA* 13:14[146]). Human beings typically understand "every progress [as . . .] progress towards becoming-conscious; every regress in becoming-unconscious" (*KSA* 13:14[146]) – and understand themselves, in turn, as a "higher type" of living being in virtue of the comparatively advanced form their consciousness takes. Yet, according to Nietzsche, this "old prejudice" (*KSA* 10:7[126]) mistakenly affirms our "most impoverished and error-prone organ" (*GM* II:16). Similar to his assessment of reason as a tool of the body in *Z*, Nietzsche argues in an 1883 note that consciousness is "just a tool" of embodied existence, an organ that is perhaps the most "poorly developed," "erroneous," and "defective" of all human organs (*KSA* 10:7 [126]). In this note, Nietzsche questions the assumption that consciousness is a sign of more advanced life forms, calls for us to recognize the value of our unconscious, embodied life, and suggests that we "reverse the rank-ordering" of consciousness and unconsciousness, given that consciousness emerges as a tool of unconscious, embodied life (as a "sign-language" of bodily existence).

[6] See also *GM* III:12.

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Other reasons Nietzsche offers for questioning the "achievement" of consciousness include its status as belonging to "the community and herd-aspects of [an individual's] nature" – those aspects of one's nature that tend to work against one's will to power – and its tendencies to corrupt, falsify, make superficial, and overgeneralize (*GS* 354).[7]

For Nietzsche, the world's debasement by consciousness connects to how human consciousness invents and deploys concepts so that human beings might communicate through language.[8] In language, human beings recast the world, deploying "a mobile army of metaphors, metonyms, and anthropomorphisms" that reduces "unique and wholly individualized original experience[s]" into mutually intelligible concepts, "equating what is unequal" (*TL* 1).[9] Furthermore, insofar as the "seduction of language (and the fundamental errors of reason petrified within it)" misleads us into thinking that humans are free, responsible, individual subjects, it diverts our attention from our nature as "driving, willing" animals (*GM* I:13).

Nietzsche also critically evaluates memory – a capacity potentially present in other living things (*KSA* 7:19[161]) but most developed in the human being (Loeb 2006: 168) – and castigates conventional morality. These distinguishing features of humanity, he argues, do not make us distinguished: both an abundance of memory (*UM* II:1, *AOM* 122, *Z* P:3; *GM* I:10) and conventional morality (*HH* 107; *GM* I:13–14; *TI* "Morality" 4; *A* 6) tend to weaken the will to power, thus weakening strong forms of life and harming us.[10] Given Nietzsche's calls for humanity's re-naturalization, his analysis of conventional morality – as that which weakens and domesticates the human animal, all the while masquerading as an "improvement" of the "human beast" (*TI* "Improvers" 2) – is especially noteworthy.

Many of Nietzsche's reflections on the potentially negative value of general human faculties, cognitive capacities, and intellectual products involve unequivocal attempts to de-center human beings and question humanity's significance. In the well-known opening of *TL*, Nietzsche calls human beings "clever beasts" whose invention of cognition "was the most arrogant and mendacious minute of 'world history,' but nevertheless, it was only a minute" (*TL* 1).[11] Here, humanity is one species among many;

[7] See Katsafanas (2016: 48–54, 62–63).
[8] For more on the connection between consciousness and language in Nietzsche, see Abel (2015: 51–53), Katsafanas (2016: 37–41), and Riccardi (2015a: 225).
[9] See also Nietzsche's reflections on "language-metaphysics" in *TI* "Reason" 5 and "philosophical mythology" in *WS* 11.
[10] See also Lemm (2004, 2009); Richardson (2020).
[11] Thanks to Gary Shapiro for reminding me of this passage.

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the celebrated human intellect, which we assumed distinguished us from all other animals, is a fleeting, arbitrary, and ultimately pointless faculty. This same tendency – to frame his critical assessments of humanity's faculties in ways that deliberately de-center human beings and resist human exceptionalism – is present in his critical assessments of memory (*UM* II:1) and morality (*HH* 107, *BGE* 44).

Nietzsche thus rejects human exceptionalism. In rejecting human exceptionalism, however, it is not the case that Nietzsche thereby denies the distinctiveness of human beings. After all, he designates human beings the deepest and most "interesting" of all animals (*GM* I:6; *A* 14).[12] Rather, Nietzsche does not understand "humanity in general" (*A* 4) as more valuable than other forms of life simply in virtue of its all-too-human capacities. Indeed, we find that Nietzsche is staunchly critical of human ways of being and thinking, arguing that they tend to lead to an impoverishment of life as will to power. As a species, Nietzsche argues that "humans are the biggest failures, the sickliest animals who have strayed the most dangerously far from their instincts" (*A* 14). Yet he also believes there are stronger, healthier human beings who learn to embrace their instincts, as well as a "higher type" beyond the human being, "a type of *Übermensch* in relation to humanity in general" (*A* 4) who overcomes these failures of humanity thus far.[13] As we see in *Zarathustra*, both stronger, healthier individuals and that higher type become possible *only* when humanity is re-naturalized. But this first requires nature to be de-humanized.

11.1.2 The De-humanization of Nature

In addition to his rejection of human exceptionalism, Nietzsche's critique of anthropocentrism also includes a critical evaluation of what he calls the "humanization of nature [*Vermenschlichung der Natur*]" (*KSA* 10:10[43], 10:13[20]). The humanization of nature is the tendency of human beings to project their values and categories for understanding onto the natural world (*KSA* 9:11[7]; *BGE* 9; *TI* "Skirmishes" 19). It is "the interpretation according to us" (*KSA* 12:1[29]) involving the erroneous teachings that "nature is like man" (*KSA* 10:10[43]), that the natural world itself conforms to the human categories we employ to make sense of it. In an 1881 note, Nietzsche identifies this error and unequivocally calls for its correction: "Earlier,

[12] According to Nietzsche, these features emerge as "happy accidents" from a host of bungled instincts and uniquely human errors.
[13] Loeb and Tinsley (2019).

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humanity and philosophers projected the human into nature—let's de-humanize nature! [*entmenschlichen* wir die Natur!]" (*KSA* 9:11[238])

De-humanizing nature, for Nietzsche, involves noticing and excavating "aesthetic anthropomorphisms [*ästhetischen Menschlichkeiten*]" (*GS* 109): we must identify both our projection of rational order, beauty, wisdom, purpose, and morality onto the world and our failure so far to recognize these as human projections (instead of understanding the natural world as itself manifesting these qualities). In a late note, Nietzsche describes the humanization of nature and its danger in more detail:

> All the values by means of which we have tried so far to render the world estimable for ourselves and which then proved inapplicable and therefore devaluated the world all these values are, psychologically considered, the results of certain perspectives of utility, designed to maintain and increase human constructs of domination and they have been falsely projected into the essence of things. What we find here is still the hyperbolic naïveté of man: positing himself as the meaning and measure of the value of things. (*KSA* 13:11[99])

According to Nietzsche, it is only when we recognize our false, human-centric projections as such that we can begin to de-humanize nature, learn more about the natural world as it is (as "for all eternity chaos" [*GS* 109] or "*Chaos sive natura*" [*KSA* 9:11[197]]), and come to know ourselves as natural beings. We see this in *Z*, too, when Zarathustra praises the open sky for its accidentality, purity, and innocence and attempts to clear it of the "drift-clouds" of purpose, freeing it from "servitude" under the human projection of purpose (*Z* III.4). In *Z*, the open sky is a stand-in for the natural world devoid of human projections and values. In Part Three, as Laurence Lampert aptly notes, Nietzsche intends for Zarathustra to reveal that beliefs in purposiveness – specifically, beliefs that understand natural beings as participating in a shared, global purpose – are "'human constructs of domination' that have set themselves in the heavens as earth's necessity, purpose, or guilt" (Lampert 1986: 175). Such constructs "will be justly cursed by [Zarathustra's] new teaching on earth and sky" (Lampert 1986: 175), a teaching that affirms the inexhaustible, chaotic richness of the de-humanized natural world. Nietzsche's call to "de-humanize" nature, then, is a call for human beings to unearth human projections (*qua* concepts and values that we impose in error on the natural world) and, when possible, withdraw these projections from the natural world. Of course, Nietzsche does not endorse a kind of disinterested realism, free of drive-based, affective interpretations (*GS* 57). Instead, he aims to disabuse us of our conventional assumption that our erroneous, unnatural human

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projections (especially metaphysical and theological constructs) are essentially truth-disclosing.

Nietzsche indicts humankind's tendency to humanize nature in part because such a tendency functions like other processes of the human intellect mentioned above: nature humanized is nature falsified. Even more critical from Nietzsche's perspective, however, is that the unwitting humanization of nature precludes the naturalization of humanity, as the process of humanity's naturalization follows nature's de-humanization. In an early note, he identifies his task as "the de-humanization of nature [*Entmenschung der Natur*] and then the naturalization of man [*Vernatürlichung des Menschen*], after he has attained the pure concept 'nature'" (*KSA* 9:11[211]). This ordering is no anomaly: Nietzsche consistently frames the de-humanization of nature as a precursor to the naturalization of the human being (*GS* 109, *BGE* 230, *TI* "Raids" 37).[14] In Part Two of *Z*, Nietzsche has Zarathustra teach four consecutive lessons that sketch the process of the de-humanization of nature and re-naturalization of humanity. After Zarathustra foreshadows the importance of naturalizing humanity by framing human beings as animals ashamed of their instincts and recommending that the "seeker of knowledge wanders among human beings *as* among animals" (*Z* II.3), he describes how the "false values and words of delusion" of the priests make human beings ashamed of their naturalness and hide it from them: "Who created such caves and stairs of penitence? Were they not those who wanted to hide and were ashamed before the pure sky?" (*Z* II.4). In this section, Zarathustra hints that the only path to healthier individuals, life affirmation, and the *Übermensch* is for individuals to attune themselves to their embodied, animal nature. This involves resisting those all-too-human comportments and values that have been dominant thus far so that they can recognize the importance of natural, more-than-human values and "the pure sky [can peek] again through the broken ceilings and down upon grass and red poppy and broken walls" (*Z* II.4).[15] Zarathustra goes on to describe how the de-humanization of nature, as the excavation and removal of human projections, "tear[s] open the ground of [the] souls [of the virtuous]" (*Z* II.5). In order for human beings to become receptive to the natural world and their own naturalness – to make room for more-than-human values, new ways of envisioning virtue, and the creation of new goods – their all-too-human,

[14] See also Loeb (2017b: 22–26).

[15] I say "more-than-human" values rather than "other-than-human" values here because on Nietzsche's view human beings can share certain values with other-than-human life forms.

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conventionally virtuous souls must be broken open via the "plowshare" of Zarathustra's teaching. Only then, when one excavates the projections of humanity and other "rabble" values from the natural world (and from *oneself* as a piece of nature), can one learn to become natural again, "neighbor to eagles, neighbor to snow, neighbor to sun" (*Z* II.6). Moreover, only by becoming re-naturalized can individual human beings identify empowering tasks and find a "wellspring of joy" in the "highest regions" where they can "build our nest in the tree called future [and] eagles shall bring us solitary ones food in their beaks" (*Z* II.6).

When we humanize nature, we understand ourselves as beings with the capacity to make sense of the natural world as it actually is, instead of understanding the natural world (and our place in it) as a means through which we can make sense of *ourselves* as we actually are (as living beings willing power). Our tendencies to project human values onto the natural world, and to understand human values as the *only* values, not only prevent us from recognizing value in the natural world apart from human projections; they also prevent a much-needed familiarity with how other natural beings value that allows us to recognize who we truly are (living beings willing power) and what is truly valuable (power in Nietzsche's sense). Before we can "re-translate the human being back into nature [*Den Menschen nämlich zurückübersetzen in die Natur*]" (*BGE* 230), then, we must "become master over the many vain and overly enthusiastic interpretations and connotations that have so far been scrawled and painted over that eternal basic text of *homo natura*" (*BGE* 230). In sum, we must (1) see how even humanity's *own* naturalness has been humanized by a host of projections and misunderstandings that function to obscure this naturalness, (2) recover those pieces of nature in ourselves, and (3) adopt or create values that enable us to flourish as the natural beings we are.

Nietzsche also resists human projections of agency (and corresponding notions of moral accountability and duty) because they constitute an unwarranted, falsifying humanization of nature. In *HH*, Nietzsche remarks that man "has been accustomed to seeing in accountability and duty the patent of nobility of his humanity" (*HH* 107). Yet because his actions are "nature and necessity [. . .] [just as] he stands before plants, so must he stand before the actions of men and before his own. He can admire their strength, beauty, fullness, but he may not find any merit in them" (*HH* 107).[16] This early critique, which draws our attention to how

[16] In his claim that we "may not find any merit" in our actions and the actions of others in *HH* 107, Nietzsche utilizes a conventionally moral sense of "merit."

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falsifying human projections of agency and moral accountability result in unwarranted approbation and disapprobation, is preserved in Nietzsche's later work (*GM* I:13). According to Nietzsche, humanity celebrates morality as a noble and characteristically human development. More specifically, he argues that modern Europeans tend to understand actions congruous with conventional Christian morality as praiseworthy accomplishments. Yet Nietzsche suggests that learning how our actions are the result of "nature and necessity" – that we could not have done otherwise – troubles our understanding of accountability, leads us to doubt the merit of our actions, and strips those actions of their all-too-human "patent of nobility." When we recognize how our actions generally follow from nature and necessity, we can begin to understand how we are more like plants than we might otherwise be inclined to admit.

Nietzsche draws this same parallel between plants and human beings in *BGE* 44, where he argues that a morality which strives for "the universal green-pasture happiness of the herd" hinders the growth of "the plant 'human'" – whereas "everything in him that is kin to beasts of prey and serpents serves the enhancement of the species 'man' *as much as its opposite does*." Here Nietzsche explicitly calls the human being "the plant 'human'" to emphasize the shared nature of plants and human beings – their nature, that is, as living beings – and argues that the human being's most basic, plant-like, animalistic instincts serve to improve humanity. Such reflections again indicate a Nietzschean agenda to re-naturalize humanity, to recognize "the basic text of *homo natura*" (that is, "the human being as a creature of nature" [Lemm 2020]), and to "re-translate the human back into nature" (*BGE* 230). Once this re-translation occurs – specifically, once we understand human beings fundamentally as living beings willing power – we will see that for morality to be "healthy" it must be "governed by an instinct of life" (*TI* "Morality" 4). Additionally, human beings can understand what is good for us by understanding ourselves as natural, living beings, as complexes of drives willing power, just like other living beings. In short, when we re-translate ourselves back into nature, we recognize the good as "[e]verything that enhances the feeling of power in man, will to power, power itself" (*A* 3).

In all of these critiques, we find Nietzsche de-centering humanity and characteristically human capacities and pursuits, and instead directing our attention to the animal (and even vegetable) qualities retained by the human being as a living being who wills power. Nietzsche encourages his readers to come to recognize and embrace these qualities and instincts in themselves, to learn to repair that "forcible breach with [their] animal

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past" resulting from "a declaration of war against all the old instincts" (*GM* II:16). In each of these passages, Nietzsche calls for humanity's re-naturalization so that we may become healthier and flourish.

11.2 Nietzsche's Positive Vision: Re-naturalizing Humanity and Proto-ecocentric Strains in His Thought

Together with Nietzsche's critique of human exceptionalism and his call to de-humanize nature, we also find support for a positive, proto-ecocentric view: a vision that recognizes the other-than-human world (both the biotic community and the inorganic elements of our world that condition human life) as a source of value. In such a view, living well and meaningfully requires one to acknowledge and incorporate other-than-human sources of value into the living of one's life, instead of projecting existing human values onto the other-than-human natural world and understanding that world merely as a means to achieving one's own (human-centric) value/s. In this section, I detail three key elements of Nietzsche's positive, proto-ecocentric vision: (1) the value of other-than-human life; (2) his project of the "naturalization of humanity"; and (3) his call for an ecological conscience.[17]

Although we see glimmers of ecocentrism throughout Nietzsche's corpus, they appear most clearly and forcefully in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. It will hardly be surprising that Nietzsche comes closest to articulating what can be characterized as an environmental ethical view – a theory underpinning how human beings ought to relate to, and behave toward, the natural, other-than-human world – in *Zarathustra*. After all, the text is rife with symbolic natural imagery. Nietzsche situates Zarathustra's entire transformative journey in the natural world: he stumbles through the desert wilderness, wanders through the forest, sails across the sea, converses with the sun and open sky, and ascends the mountains in his solitude. Zarathustra's closest and most loyal friends are his animals, his eagle and his serpent, who can sense truly elevated individuals who do not breathe "bad air" and who breathe better air than the higher men do (*Z* IV.14).

[17] Importantly, I am not arguing that we can infer that (1) the other-than-human world has value to which we can attune ourselves from (2) Nietzsche's claim that, when possible, we ought to withdraw human projections from nature. Rather, I see these as two separate moments – the withdrawal of human projections from nature and the recognition of more-than-human values – of Nietzsche's de-humanization/re-naturalization program.

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11.2.1 The Value of Other-Than-Human Life

According to Nietzsche, humans are not the only beings with ends all their own: all living beings have ends and goals toward which they direct themselves (*Z* II.12). Animals, plants, and even amoebae have their own ways of being end-directed, of pursuing certain characteristic aims and activities, and ultimately, of valuing (*KSA* 11:35[58]; 13:14[81]). These are important upshots of Nietzsche's biological conception of the will to power (*BGE* 13; *GS* 349; *GM* II:12), which he proposes for the first time in the second book of *Zarathustra*, asserting that "only where life is, is there also [. . .] will to power!" (*Z* II.12).[18]

In Nietzsche's view, human values have their basis in our drives and the aims we have in virtue of those drives. If I value economic flourishing, for example, I must (at a minimum) possess activities associated with economic success as goals toward which I aim (in virtue of one or more of my drives). Something similar is true of other-than-human living things, according to Nietzsche, although we do not typically think of other-than-human beings as having values of their own.

Let us consider an example. Imagine a pineapple sage plant (*Salvia elegans*). On this view, since photosynthesis is an end-directed process the pineapple sage must undergo to grow and thrive, one of a pineapple sage plant's aims is to photosynthesize.[19] Because of this aim, the pineapple sage is situated in the world in a particular way: it has the potential to be transformed in certain ways (by the presence or absence of light) and to transform its world in certain ways (in this case, either using sunlight to "split" water – separating hydrogen from carbon dioxide, and turning carbon dioxide into sugars for energy – or failing to split water in the absence of sunlight). For this reason, the pineapple sage can be said to have a positive evaluative orientation toward sunlight. From this perspective, then, understanding plants, animals, and other living beings as end-directed allows us to make sense of the claim that such beings have values all their own. Otherwise put, the evaluative orientations other-than-human life forms have in virtue of their end-directedness (their nature as living beings willing power) constitute other-than-human values. These

[18] Richardson (2004) famously frames the will to power as a biological principle. While I am in agreement with this assessment, I do not agree with his interpretation in its entirety.

[19] To say that the plant must photosynthesize to grow and thrive is to acknowledge that photosynthesis is an activity through which the plant *wills power* in Nietzsche's sense. Note that willing power here clearly does not involve anything like a typical "will" as conscious intentionality.

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evaluative orientations emerge from the specific ways in which other-than-human life forms aim at ends as they will power.

My claim here is not that human and other-than-human values are structurally identical. While other-than-human values can be fully explained with an appeal to evaluative orientations to which living beings are disposed in virtue of certain of their ends/aims (such that for a plant, *to value x is just to have x as an end/aim*), human values require both an end/aim and some second-order assessment of that end/aim (either a reflective endorsement of that aim or, as Katsafanas argues, a lack of disapproval when one is presented with that aim [Katsafanas 2016: 131]). Additionally, on this Nietzschean view, it is still the case that "*all attributions of . . . value are anthropogenic*: originating in and dependent upon human acts of evaluation [emphasis mine]" ([Thompson 2017: 81] paraphrasing Callicott [1989: 133]). Though plants have values of their own (in virtue of their aims or ends), they do not *attribute* value to things. For example, although the pineapple sage plant is positively disposed toward sunlight, it does not attribute value to the sunlight. Nietzsche draws our attention to this when he claims that "[i]t is we, the thinking-sensing ones, who really and continually make something that is not yet there: the whole perpetually growing world of valuations, colors, weights, perspectives, scales, affirmations, and negations" (*GS* 301).

This account of other-than-human value might seem at odds with Nietzsche's well-known claim that "nature is always value-less—[it] has . . . been given, granted value, and we were the givers and granters" (*GS* 301). But the aim of *GS* 301 is not to assert that there are no evaluative orientations other than those of human beings. Instead, Nietzsche's claim that "nature is valueless" brings attention to the fact that those absolute, non-contingent values human beings have long projected onto nature do not inhere in nature itself (*KSA* 12:6[14]). Indeed, the evaluative orientations of other-than-human life forms are contingent on the ends of the beings to which they belong; there are no absolute or non-contingent values in nature itself.

11.2.2 *Toward the "Naturalization of Humanity"*

In Section 11.2.1, I fleshed out Nietzsche's critical assessment of the humanization of nature and his attempts to de-humanize nature. There I also began to sketch the re-naturalization of humanity: what it means to "re-translate the human back into nature" (*BGE* 230) after engaging in practices to de-humanize nature (including attempts to de-humanize

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ourselves as natural beings) – that is, practices that allow us to recognize and disentangle the natural world and ourselves from harmful and erroneous human projections. In this section, I expand this sketch, offering a detailed account of the naturalization of humanity (*Vernatürlichung des Menschen*): Nietzsche's call for the human being to become more natural (*KSA* 12:10[53]; 12:9[121]). It is only by seeing ourselves as natural beings, as willing power in the world as will to power, that we can identify our tasks and become strong individuals. In no other text is Nietzsche's project of humanity's re-naturalization as central as in *Zarathustra*.

Nietzsche hints at his project of re-naturalization in the way he likens features of Zarathustra and of other characters in the text to natural features, and also the way he likens events and life-affirming values to artifacts discovered in nature (those "colorful shells" [*Z* II.5]). That "well-spring of joy" found in the "highest regions" flows forth into the overfull sea of Zarathustra's soul and thus cannot become "murky" (*Z* II.6). As with the "lightning" of the *Übermensch* (*Z* P:4) and the "hailstorm" of the annihilators of previous values (*Z* II.6), Nietzsche likens Zarathustra to natural weather events (he is a "strong wind to all lowlands" [*Z* II.6]) and his moods to seasons (*Z* II.6). Nietzsche even naturalizes those who have not yet been re-naturalized: priests are "black ponds" (*Z* II.4) and the rabble are described as poisoning "holy water" with their all-too-human attitudes and virtues (*Z* II.6).

At the beginning of *Z*, Zarathustra more explicitly describes his project. First, he calls upon those who listen to "*remain faithful to the earth*" (*Z* P:3) so that a healthier, more life-affirming form of humanity can arise (*Z* P:4). In addition to instructing humans on how to become healthier living beings, he also teaches "humans the meaning of their being, which is the *Übermensch*" (*Z* P:7), heralding a noble superhuman species made possible by the existence of stronger, healthier human beings. In Zarathustra's claim that faithfulness to the earth is required for healthier human beings and for the advent of a superhuman species, Nietzsche expounds his project of humanity's re-naturalization, a project that requires the affirmation of human life *as embodied, driven life*. To become re-naturalized, we must not only recognize ourselves as animals, as living beings containing bits of wild nature and complexes of drives willing power, but also to learn to revere our naturalness, our embodiment, and our animality. Humanized nature is the will of the weak, life-denying individuals who cannot accept themselves and affirm themselves as pieces of nature; naturalized humanity is the will of strong, life-affirming individuals who, in understanding themselves as pieces of nature, learn healthy ways to value.

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Nietzsche's call for humanity's re-naturalization in *Z* is perhaps most apparent in the contrast he draws throughout *Z* between tame, domesticated animals and wild animals or "beasts of prey." The symbolic descriptions of these two different kinds of animals are exceptionally revealing. Camels are burdened, weighed-down pack animals who take on life-denying values with an attitude of reverence (*Z* I.1); they represent human beings weighed down by unnatural values that lead them to deny their instincts (*Z* III.11:2). Nietzsche describes moles as blind, subterranean animals who are lame (*lahm*) and paralyzing (*lähmend*) (*Z* III.2:1); they symbolize human beings who prescribe universal goods and evils, values that function to debilitate and paralyze the will to power (*Z* III.11:2). Cows are lazy ruminants who avoid effort and make everything they eat into something palatable (*Z* 1.2). They, like the swine who "[chew] and [digest] everything" (*Z* III.11:2) regardless of its value for them, represent overly tolerant, "all-complacent" (*Z* III.11:2) human beings who aim for comfort and small forms of human happiness and activity (including "hectic work and unrest" [*Z* I.9]). Their tolerance results in a failure to discriminate among values, an inability to discern which values enhance their instincts and which values hinder those instincts. In this respect, they resemble the ass, the animal who affirms every human value with an undiscriminating yes (*Z* III.11:2). In each of these cases, the type of human being the animal represents is insufficiently natural; in each case, the human being invests in human projections of value and characteristically human goals to the detriment of their instincts – and, ultimately, to the detriment of their flourishing as a living being willing power. The "animal tamers" who preach these all-too-human values and goals (whether they be priests or humanists) are designated as such because they preach the humanization of humanity's naturalness. By domesticating the human animal, these animal tamers turn the human being into "the most bungled of all the animals" (*A* 14); they make the human being "a heavy burden to himself" (*Z* III.11:2).

On the other hand, Nietzsche's descriptions of wild animals and "beasts of prey" in *Z* are laudatory and aspirational. Nietzsche frames these animals as proud inhabitants of the natural world who embrace it courageously despite its dangers as the venue in which they can retain their wildness. Eagles are lofty and light; they fly high above the rabble and its rabble-happiness (*Z* P:10, *Z* II.6). Though their loftiness and their height make for a lonely and solitary existence (*Z* IV.13), they fly proudly and courageously: they embrace the unknown abyss of the open sky but retain a lightness (*Z* IV.13:4). Zarathustra celebrates the lion as "hungry, violent,

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lonely, godless" (*Z* II.8) – representative of those human beings who destroy previous values (*Z* I.1) – and the wolf as wild, violent, and evil (*Z* II.8). The lion and the wolf are in stark contrast to those "well-fed, famous wise men" who live among the rabble to serve "the people [. . .] and the people's superstition," functioning as "draft animals [. . . who] remain servants and harnessed, even if they gleam in golden harnesses" (*Z* II.8).

To become re-naturalized, then, the human being must (1) be unburdened of harmful aspects of humanity – those human projections, activities, and tendencies that leave her in ill health and unable to affirm this life and world – and (2) learn to recognize herself as a piece of nature, as a living being willing power, and to affirm this discovery. In the language of *Zarathustra*, the re-naturalization of humanity requires becoming less domesticated and more like a wild animal. To become more natural, we must immerse ourselves in the wild, natural world and come to see power as the highest value by both observing natural beings willing power and acknowledging our status as natural beings.

11.2.3 On Developing an Ecological Conscience

As demonstrated in Section 11.2.2, Nietzsche's project of the re-naturalization of humanity requires human beings to recognize that we are fundamentally natural beings, more like plants and other-than-human animals than we like to admit. Importantly, Nietzsche's vision for how this can be accomplished includes his call for human beings to develop an ecological conscience.[20] Developing an ecological conscience in Nietzsche's sense involves (1) attuning oneself to the natural world and (2) recognizing one's status as a natural being. Human beings who develop an ecological conscience cultivate a noble reverence and gratitude for the

[20] Although I characterize Nietzsche as calling for human beings to develop an ecological conscience, it is worth nothing that Nietzsche does *not* use the term "ecology [*Ökologie*]" when he issues this call. In fact, there are good reasons for why Nietzsche doesn't use the word "ecology" or describe his project as "ecological." First, Ernst Haeckel only coined the term *Ökologie* in 1866, so it was nowhere near as widely used then as it is today. Additionally, Haeckel's use of *Ökologie* was narrower than ours. While "ecology" today is a field that studies a variety of interactions between organisms and their environment, Haeckel proposed "ecology" as a new branch of biology that would exclusively study how organisms *adapt* to their environment. We can see, then, why Nietzsche (though he read Haeckel) would not have adopted this term or characterized his thought as "ecological" thinking. Nietzsche rejects Haeckel's account of organisms' development through mere adaptation to their environment and understands Haeckel's account as incompatible with his account of the will to power (which, as a biological thesis, offers a "competing" account of how organisms develop) (*KSA* 12:7[9]).

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natural world (*BGE* 14, *KSA* 12:10[157]) so that we may learn from it about ourselves (*KSA* 12:10[157]; *A* 14) rather than falsifying it for our own ends (*A* 24). Additionally, developing an ecological conscience requires one to apprehend the fundamental relationality between oneself and the natural world as an environment that conditions one's existence. According to Nietzsche, only when we can see ourselves as natural beings, as willing power in the world as will to power just like all living things, can we identify strengthening tasks around which our lives should be oriented and become healthier, more life-affirming human beings.

A key strategy Nietzsche believes one can employ to develop an ecological conscience is taking time to distance oneself from human communities and to situate oneself in natural places and environments, in solitude, to observe how the natural world unfolds.[21] To remain faithful to the earth – to natural, embodied existence – one has to, after all, come to know it first-personally, in one's own way.[22] It is only by going into the desert wilderness (*Wüste*), "suffering thirst with beasts of prey" (rather than drinking from "poisoned" cisterns with camels and camel drivers) and coming to know ourselves as living beings willing power that we can learn how to become natural again (*Z* II:6). Once one is situated in the natural world, one must attune oneself to it, recognizing how living beings value and which conditions promote their flourishing. We see the importance of this attunement in the significance of a fundamental receptivity in Zarathustra, a listening to the earth that recognizes that "[t]here are a thousand paths that have never yet been walked; a thousand healths and hidden islands of life" (*Z* I.22:2). Later, Nietzsche also reflects upon the "unfathomable" parts of life, the depths of which man so far has been unable to comprehend, in part because he is too busy bestowing his own "virtues" onto her (*Z* II.10) instead of listening for the wisdom of the other-than-human world.

The significance of this attunement becomes especially clear when one notices (1) how Nietzsche's attunement to values he found in the natural world – such as preservation, incorporation, and growth, all essential to power – informed his critical thoughts on morality (as well as his positive account of cultivation and self-overcoming) and (2) how Nietzsche ties the potential of humanity (and individual human beings) to the quality of the

[21] Zarathustra himself employs and recommends this strategy (*Z* P:1; *Z* I.12; *Z* II.1, 22; *Z* III.1,9; and so on).

[22] For an earlier draft of this chapter, Keith Ansell-Pearson suggested a clear kinship between Nietzsche and Thoreau on this point and others. Although a treatment of Thoreau is beyond the scope of this chapter, I appreciate this generative suggestion.

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"soil" in which they grow. Regarding the former, cultivating an ecological conscience requires recognizing that striving to advance oneself in a world in which limiting, artificial values efface natural values leads to an impoverishment of life. This recognition, however, involves being attuned to the workings of life itself. When one attunes oneself to life, one can come to realize that closing oneself off within "homo-exclusive" values (Acampora 1994) potentially forestalls expansive possibilities for being and acting. Attending to values in the natural world, on the other hand, points the human being toward stronger, healthier ways to will. After all, only a "corrupt" being "chooses [. . .] prefers [. . .] what is *injurious* to it" (*A* 6) – and Nietzsche understands a tendency toward this kind of corruption as typically human. Indeed, this tendency is responsible for the dominance of Christianity, a belief system that Nietzsche argues teaches individuals to despise their bodies and desires and ultimately denies life.[23] Becoming a healthier human being and a more life-affirming individual, then, requires one to become more like the other-than-human, attuning oneself mindfully to conditions that promote one's flourishing and seeking them out.

Becoming a healthier human being also requires recognizing the importance of the "soil" in which one grows. This too is a lesson that one can learn from the natural world. Just as hardy plants and adaptive fauna learn to live and thrive in harsh environments, the "richest" soil for the development of great human beings are wild, unpredictable, chaotic conditions, "regions where it is hard to live" (*Z* P:5) that can serve as arenas for strife and struggle (Acampora 2013). Otherwise put, wilderness and wild nature are exceedingly favorable conditions for the development of strong individuals (*KSA* 12:7[46]; *GM* I:11; *GM* II:16; *TI* "Skirmishes" 45), though the wilderness of which Nietzsche speaks here is usually the wild nature of strong human beings as they will power in their own way.

The kind of ecological conscience for which Nietzsche calls is unique. For example, one who possesses an ecological conscience of the kind Nietzsche describes would not sacrifice the values of healthy, flourishing human life to extra-human values with the belief that other life forms ultimately take priority, or have more value. Instead, cultivating a Nietzschean ecological conscience requires one to apprehend and appreciate one's fundamental relationality: as a living thing among living things,

[23] I say Christianity *ultimately* denies life because it is clear that Nietzsche believes it plays a life-preserving function for a time insofar as it allows certain human beings to avoid "suicidal nihilism" (*GM* III:28).

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one wills power in the world as will to power.[24] One who has developed an ecological conscience affirms life in its totality, especially that complex network of wills to power to which one belongs as inexhaustible wellspring and experimental site for potentially new ways of being, living, and creating meaning – that is, new forms of life. This network is a more-than-human ecosystem of sorts in relation to which human beings develop and through which they can be empowered.

As an environmental ethical view – a view about how human beings should relate to the natural world – Nietzsche's view is also distinctive. As I argue earlier, Nietzsche believes not *only* that all living beings have value, but that other-than-human beings have lessons to teach us. Since the comportment we ought to have toward other-than-human nature involves recognizing its value *to us*, part of its value is instrumental. To call attention to this emphasizes another distinctive feature of the proto-ecocentric strains in Nietzsche's thought we have discussed so far: his explanation for *why* we ought to respect the natural world. For Nietzsche, a sizeable part of what should motivate such respect and reverence (his meta-ethical explanation of why we should value what we value) – apart from the overflowing gratitude of an overfull soul (*Z* III:14; *EH* BT:2) – is the natural world's status as the venue in which healthier human beings become possible, in which they can discover new meanings for themselves. In Nietzsche's view, higher individuals are grateful to the natural world because attending to natural values shows them new ways to revere themselves. In this sense, the natural world is the condition of the possibility of a stronger, healthier humanity. Without the fruitful chaos of nature (Drenthen 2005: 326) and the superfluity of undiscovered values that nature offers (for which we must listen [*Z* I.22:2]), we risk becoming those shapeless, aimless, "objective" men from *BGE* (207), or "last men" (*Z* P:5), comfortable with small pleasures and little conflict, assured of our perspective on things.

Nietzsche's environmental ethical view is distinctive in another way. Rather than prescribing clear-cut, action-guiding principles for how we ought to engage with the other-than-human world, he offers his readers a theoretical framework that shapes how we relate to that world, an opportunity for his readers to come to know the natural world – and themselves – differently. Although we human beings share in the same "nature and necessity" (*HH* 107) of other living things, coming to know ourselves as natural beings akin to plants and animals will be transformative: this

[24] Of course, insofar as will to power is a biological principle, the "world" here is the *organic* world.

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knowledge will transform the necessity that we are. In *HH* 34, for example, Nietzsche describes how knowledge functions not only to reveal our necessity, but also to free us from external forces (customs and other "ordinary fetters of life") and to reconfigure the necessity that we are via a rearrangement of our inner lives (in part by freeing us from "the thought that one is not only nature or more than nature").

Importantly, however, Nietzsche thinks we will not come to know ourselves as natural beings unless we attune ourselves to the natural world, cultivating an attitude of receptivity so that we might learn from it. Once we develop this ecological conscience and come to know ourselves as natural beings, he expects that we will be motivated to relate to the natural world differently. We will learn to revere the natural, other-than-human world (in part, as a site of self-knowledge) and affirm that world as part of the ecosystem we inhabit that conditions our strength and growth, a venue in which we can thrive.

11.3 Nietzsche's Significance for Environmental Philosophy and Policy

The proto-ecocentric strains in Nietzsche's thought outlined in Section 11.2 have unique and valuable contributions to make to contemporary debates in environmental ethics, not least because they afford us a perspective from which to critique anthropocentric environmental ethical frameworks (according to which the natural world is either merely or primarily instrumentally valuable). In them, we find a call to value the ecosphere both in itself and as a way to experience a matrix of aims, meanings, and values that allow us to recognize that we live in a meaningful world with values that both exceed us and can inform how we live.

Firstly, just as we limit and falsify the world when we try to apprehend it via our "four-cornered little human reason" or make it intelligible by inventing and deploying human concepts and values, so too can understanding the value of the natural world primarily in terms of human values preclude us from recognizing more-than-human values that exceed limiting, conventional projections of human value. Projecting human values onto the natural world and understanding the natural world as valuable only with reference to those values simply constitutes a new way of falsifying the world by making ourselves the "meaning and measure of things." In doing so, we run roughshod over the values of other-than-human life in a way that prevents a discernment of those values – a discernment that is critical for Nietzsche.

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Additionally, Nietzsche claims that we have much to learn from the natural world. In particular, attending to the natural world and more-than-human values can help us recognize how we, as living beings, value – which can (and should) be transformative. For Nietzsche, then, anthropocentric environmental ethical views that prioritize strictly human values would not only hinder our discernment of more-than-human values, they would also function to potentially block transformative growth, health, and well-being. By understanding the natural world's value only in terms of already-existing human values, they reinscribe conventional values rather than revaluing values from life's perspective and ends, as Nietzsche recommends.

Nietzsche argues that when we incorporate lessons from the other-than-human world on how to live and value, we learn to affirm life in its totality. Such a practice enables us to recognize that we live in a world of inexhaustible richness, an ecosphere full of other-than-human beings willing power whose end-directedness and purposeful striving we share. This recognition allows us to resist both (1) the otherworldly nihilism toward which we tend when we avow humanity as the sole source of value and (2) the nihilism of self-denial (or affective nihilism) involving the suppression of our instincts or the dissolution of our will.[25] Inhabiting such a life-affirming stance both promotes reverence for the ecosphere generally and the ends of its other-than-human denizens, and shapes how we think the natural world ought to be treated. Nietzsche's environmental thought can inform environmental policy, then, because it offers us a perspective from which we can critique overly anthropocentric, resource-oriented conservation ideologies, according to which conservation decision-making should be oriented primarily around conventional human interests and values. Moreover, in a time when the earth is increasingly dominated by humanity and exploited in the interest of leveling conventional values, remaining faithful to it is more important than ever – for the earth, but also for us.[26]

[25] Creasy (2020).

[26] My sincere thanks to Keith Ansell-Pearson and Paul Loeb for their feedback on early versions of this paper.

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2005: *Twilight of the Idols*. In *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, eds. A. Ridley and J. Norman, trans. J. Norman, 153 229. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
UM = Unzeitgemässe Betrachtungen (1873 1876)
1995: *Unfashionable Observations*, trans. R.T. Gray. In *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed. E. Behler, vol. 2. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
1997: *Untimely Meditations*, ed. D. Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
WS = Der Wanderer und sein Schatten (1880; 1886)
2013: *The Wanderer and His Shadow*. In *Human, All Too Human, II*, trans. Gary Handwerk. In *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, eds. A. D. Schrift and D. Large, vol. 4, 145 294. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
Z = Also sprach Zarathustra (1883 1885)
1909: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. T. Common. Edinburgh and London: Foulis.
1954: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*. In *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann, 109 439. New York: Viking Press.
1969: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale. London: Penguin.
2005: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. G. Parkes. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
2006: *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, eds. A. Del Caro and R. Pippin, trans. A. Del Caro. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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1954: *The Antichrist*. In *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann, 565 656. New York: Viking Press.

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2005: *The Anti-Christ*. In *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, eds. A. Ridley and J. Norman, trans. J. Norman, 1 67. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

EH = *Ecce homo* (1888)
1968: *Ecce Homo*. In *Basic Writings of Nietzsche*, ed. and trans. W. Kaufmann, 655 802. New York: Modern Library.
1989: *Ecce Homo*. In *On the Genealogy of Morals and Ecce Homo*, trans. W. Kaufmann, 215 335. New York: Random House.
2005: *Ecce Homo*. In *The Anti-Christ, Ecce Homo, Twilight of the Idols, and Other Writings*, eds. A. Ridley and J. Norman, trans. J. Norman, 69 151. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
2007: *Ecce Homo*, trans. D. Large. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

GSt = "Der griechische Staat" (1872)
2007: "The Greek State." In *GM* 2017, 164 173. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

PPP = "Die vorplatonischen Philosophen" (1872 1876)
2001: *The Pre-Platonic Philosophers*, ed. and trans. G. Whitlock. Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press.

PT = "*Über das Pathos der Wahrheit*" (1872)
1979: "On the Pathos of Truth" In *Philosophy and Truth: Selections from Nietzsche's Notebooks of the Early 1870's*, ed. and trans. D. Breazeale, 60 66. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press.

PTAG = "Die Philosophie im tragischen Zeitalter der Griechen" (1873)
1962: *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks*, trans. M. Cowan. Washington, DC: Gateway.

TL = "Über Wahrheit und Lüge im aussermoralischen Sinne" (1873)
1999: "On Truth and Lying in a Non Moral Sense." In *The Birth of Tragedy and Other Writings*, eds. R. Geuss and R. Speirs, trans. R. Speirs, 139 153. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

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CWFN = *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*
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WLN = 2003: *Writings from the Late Notebooks*, edited by R. Bittner, trans. K. Sturge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

WP = *Der Wille zur Macht*

1968: *The Will to Power*, ed. W. Kaufmann, trans. W. Kaufmann and R. J. Hollingdale. New York: Vintage.

2017: *The Will to Power*, ed. R. K. Hill, trans. R. K. Hill and M. Scarpitti. New York: Penguin.

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